

EXPLANATIONS OF MALE ABUSE OF FEMALE PARTNERS:

AN EXPLICATION, EVALUATION AND INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

Male abuse of female partners is now recognised as a major social problem that has serious and significant consequences for its victims. This study is based on the argument that this problem must not be reduced to individual acts of violence, for this risks obscuring the real nature of MAFP and, thereby, hinders the development of any effective solutions to the problem. The problem that is identified in this study is men's control and domination of their women partners.

Etiological research in the field of male abuse of female partners, to date, has tended to be empirical rather than theoretical. This current study contributes to the neglected but critical area of theoretical research into the etiology of male abuse of female partners. It provides an explication and evaluation of fourteen realist theories of male abuse of female partners. It also identifies and briefly discusses a number of other non-realist theories that also commonly appear in the literature. Only realist theories are fully explicated and appraised within this study, as it is argued that they are the only route to gaining knowledge about the world, for many of the world's most important causal mechanisms are hidden from direct view. The task of theory evaluation in this study involves evaluating theories in terms of their practical utility, conceptual coherence, and explanatory breadth, the latter being a major component of a new and important theory of theory evaluation proposed by Thagard (1978, 1989, 1992).

This study provides a new integrated theory to explain male abuse of female partners, based upon the theories which were previously shown in the study to have the greatest value. This new theory, which is referred to as *the new feminist integrated theory*, is subsequently evaluated and is shown to have considerable practical utility, explanatory breadth and conceptual coherence.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 A RECENT AREA OF RESEARCH

Male abuse of female partners (hereafter referred to as MAFP) has only a short history of 20 or 30 years as a public and academic problem. Prior to the late 1960s there was virtually no research published on the topic, in large part because the abuse of a woman by her male partner was generally considered to be a private family matter, rather than a public concern (Gelles & Loseke, 1993). The issue of men's abuse of their female partners was initially brought to the attention of the public, mental health professionals and academics by feminist groups who were providing support, empowerment and advocacy for the women partners of abusive men. In more recent years, as the public and academic awareness of the problem has developed, the literature on this form of abuse has flourished.

1.2 A MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEM

Abuse of women by their male partners, is now generally recognized as a major and critical social problem, both within New Zealand and overseas (Leibrich, Paulin, & Ransom, 1995; Russo, Koss, & Goodman, 1995). This abuse commonly involves hitting with and without weapons, choking, burning, and/or stabbing. It also commonly involves sexual violation, threats, humiliation, physical confinement, demands for service, sleep deprivation, demeaning language, isolation from family and friends, economic deprivation, the monitoring of time and whereabouts, and/or stalking.

As would be expected, the impact of this abuse on its victims is significant. American statistics show that violence towards American women, aged 15 to 44, by their male partners is the leading cause of injuries requiring medical attention, and is more common than muggings, auto accidents and cancer deaths combined (Dwyer, Smokowski, Bricout, & Wodarski, 1995). MAFP is a major source of fear and trauma for its women victims (Goodman, Koss, Fitzgerald, Russo & Keita, 1993). It has been implicated in a wide range of women's psychological and medical problems, including depression, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, chemical dependency, suicide and an increased risk of gynaecological problems (Fanslow & Norton, 1994). In addition, women are at highest risk of abuse from their male partners in their childbearing years, and violence in pregnancy has been linked to severe and negative pregnancy

outcomes (Russo et al., 1995).¹ More recently there has been an increasing acknowledgement of the serious and damaging effects of MAFP on children who have witnessed the abuse. Children who have witnessed MAFP face an increased risk of physical health problems, behavioural and emotional problems, cognitive disadvantages such as a lowered reading age, social incompetence and impaired social problem solving (Kolbo, Blakely, & Engleman, 1996). Children who grow up in homes where MAFP occurs also have an increased risk of being physically abused themselves (Balzer, Haimona, Henare, & Matchitt, 1997; McKibben, DeVos, & Newberger, 1989; Sedlak, 1988).

The private nature of the family, as well as the difficulty of measuring the behaviours involved, makes it difficult to develop accurate estimates of the incidence and prevalence of MAFP. There are, however, various indicators that suggest the extent of the problem of MAFP within New Zealand. In 1990, under the Domestic Protection Act,² the family courts received approximately 12,000 applications for non-molestation orders and approximately 6,000 applications for non-violence orders,³ in 1992, the Police attended 21,093 domestic disputes and it was estimated that by 1996 there would be approximately 10,000 men involved in *Living Without Violence* programmes in New Zealand (Leibrich et al., 1995). Furthermore, between July 1996 and June 1997, 7,174 women used women's refuge services (National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges Inc., 1997).⁴

Within New Zealand, a number of studies have attempted to assess the exact extent of the problem of MAFP. The Christchurch Development Study (Fergusson, Horward, Kershaw, & Shannon, 1986) found that 8.5 percent of mothers reported one or more assaults by their husbands or partners over a two year period. In an Otago study of women's health (Mullen, Romans-Clarkson, Herbison, & Walton, 1988), 16% of the women reported having been hit at least once by their male partner. In a more recent nation-wide survey of New Zealand men (Leibrich et al., 1995), 62% of the respondents reported committing at least one psychologically abusive act towards a woman during their lifetime.⁵

¹This literature has only considered the immediate physical risks to the developing foetus. It is likely, however, that there are also detrimental effects on the developing foetus as a result of maternal distress and fear.

²The Domestic Protection Act, 1982, has now been superseded by the Domestic Violence Act, 1995.

³These figures include interim and final orders.

⁴This figure relates only to those refuges affiliated to The National Collective of Women's Refuges.

⁵This included public or private humiliation, withholding money, destroying a partner's property, threatening to hurt, preventing a partner from doing what she wanted, or insulting or swearing at a partner.

1.3 MALE ABUSE OF FEMALE PARTNERS CANNOT BE REDUCED TO INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF VIOLENCE

The above studies attempt to assess the extent of the problem of MAFP in New Zealand, as do most overseas studies, on the basis of individual behavioural acts. Although these studies provide useful indicators of the problem, MAFP needs to be conceptualized as a process rather than an incident (Bowling, 1993).⁶ Many women who have experienced MAFP stress that it is the pattern of fear and domination that is the defining feature of their abuse, rather than the isolated tactics that are employed by their abuser (National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges, 1988). Research, therefore, that concentrates solely on behavioural acts in an attempt to understand MAFP, risks obscuring the real nature of MAFP and thereby hinders developing any real solutions to the problem. Furthermore, it is noted that the body of empirical research on MAFP focuses almost entirely on acts of *physical* violence, and generally justifies this by arguing that physical violence has more serious consequences (Bograd, 1988). Again this assumption is not always supported by the experience of women partners (National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges, 1988).

An additional factor that necessitates moving away from an acts-based understanding of MAFP, is that this type of conceptualisation fosters and encourages the acceptance of the idea of *husband battering* as a phenomenon equivalent to MAFP. This point will be elucidated in the following section.

1.4 HUSBAND BATTERING: THE IDEA OF FEMALE ABUSE OF MALE PARTNERS

Initially within the family abuse field, male violence towards female partners was identified as the major problem in relation to adult partners, rather than *husband battering* or *mutual battering*. Many have since claimed, however, that the problem has been falsely framed. They have suggested that women batter and abuse their male partners, in the same way as men do, and that this problem is as prevalent, if not more prevalent, than male perpetrated abuse (McNeely & Robinson-Simpson, 1987; Steinmetz & Lucca, 1988; Straus, 1993).⁷

The issue of what is referred to as *husband battering* in the literature, has now become one of the most prominent and long running debates within the literature on adult partner abuse, and one that is receiving increasing public attention in New Zealand via the media (Brinkworth, 1995; Revell, 1997). Despite the ample and, at

⁶Bowling (1993) likens MAFP to racial harassment in suggesting that they are both best conceptualised as a process rather than an incident.

⁷Recent data on lesbian battering has also been used to bolster the claim that women also perpetrate heterosexual partner abuse (Renzetti, 1994).

times repetitive, literature published in relation to the issue (Dobash & Dobash, 1988, 1992; Ferraro, 1990; Kurz, 1993; McNeely & Robinson-Simpson, 1987; New Zealand Law Society, 1993; Rhodes, 1992; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988; Steinmetz & Lucca, 1988; Straus, 1993; Yllö, 1988), the debate does not appear to be nearing a resolution. A resolution, however, is important for both practical and theoretical reasons (Hamberger, 1994). For assumptions made about women's violence towards their male partners will influence the development of intervention strategies, public policy (Hamberger & Potente, 1994), as well as general public support and attitudes towards women partners of abusive men. If female abuse of male partners is not in fact a genuine phenomenon, but is accepted as one, this may result in funding being diverted away from women abused by their partners, to provide services for men (Pagelow, 1984; Saunders, 1988). It may also result in women's survival strategies being increasingly stigmatized and, worse, criminalized (Hamberger & Potente, 1994; Renzetti, 1994). Alternatively, if women do abuse male partners in a similar way, and to the same extent that men abuse women, it would be imperative that this were acknowledged, for it would also clearly have important practical and theoretical implications (Hamberger, 1994).

Arguments for the existence of husband battering have been established primarily on the basis of two American national surveys conducted in 1975 and 1985 (Straus & Gelles, 1986). The strength of the two surveys is that they utilized a nationally representative sample. The prestige of these national surveys, combined with the research being repeatedly cited without reference to its limitations, may, however, have resulted in the establishment of a pseudo-phenomenon, rather than the identification of a genuine phenomenon (Ferraro, 1990).⁸ A pseudo-phenomenon is a limited empirical finding that has, over time, gained the status of truth. To establish a genuine phenomenon or robust empirical regularity, constructive replications are required (Lindsay & Ehrenberg, 1993).⁹

The major methodological limitation of the two American national surveys is that they attempt to establish the existence of husband battering solely on the basis of *behavioural acts* of physical violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1988, 1992; Ferraro, 1990;

⁸Ferraro (1990) suggests that the credence given to the survey findings and the concept of *battered husbands* has also in part been due to the fact that it does not challenge the status quo of the male dominated power structure. It is interesting to note that within the sexual abuse field there has been a similar process regarding female perpetrators. Soon after male sexual abuse of children was exposed, it was claimed that women sexually abuse children as much as men (Rush, 1996). Rush (1996) argues that this is because the sexual abuse of children could only be exposed when it presented no threat to the status quo. If men were identified as the main perpetrators, this would necessarily challenge the status quo.

⁹Constructive replication entails systematically and purposefully manipulating one variable while holding other variables constant, and involves different settings, treatments and/or methods.

Kurz, 1993; Yllö, 1988).¹⁰ No single act can, however, in itself, be considered as abuse, without a consideration of its context and its consequences. One person striking another more powerful person in self-defence, in retaliation or to provoke an imminent attack to get it over and done with (Sorenson & Telles, 1991), cannot be considered equivalent to an offensive attack, which aims to punish or dominate, or which occurs in a context of domination and results in increased control by the perpetrator. Similarly, the act of name-calling, shouting or hitting, when it invokes laughter, scorn, and not fear or even concern on the part of the recipient, cannot be considered as equivalent to these same acts, when they occur within a context of domination and invoke fear and result in increased control. If research into the prevalence and incidence of family abuse continues to rely solely on estimates of behavioural acts, there will be the potential for a major problem of obtaining too many false positives. For acts of violence, whether physical or non-physical in nature, cannot in themselves be understood as abuse, without a consideration of the meaning, context and physical and psychological impact of the physical act.¹¹

Other empirical research on the concept of *husband battering*, which has involved a variety of methods, such as laboratory studies, divorce records, health statistics, intensive interviews, and cross-cultural surveys, has attempted to access the meaning and consequences of individual acts of male and female perpetrated partner violence. In contrast to the American national surveys, this body of research has in fact suggested that men are more *abusive* towards their women partners, than women are towards their male partners. For example, when the impact of acts of partner violence has been assessed, women have been found to experience a greater number of, and more severe, negative consequences than males, and when they do perpetrate violence this is typically done in a context of self-defence or retaliation (Barnett, Kyson, & Thelen, 1992; Cascardi, Vivian, & Meyer, 1991; Counts, Brown, & Campbell, 1992; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Ferraro, 1990; Hamberger, Lohr, & Bonge, 1993; Vivian & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1994).

Further evidence to suggest that husband battering is in fact not equivalent in form to male perpetrated heterosexual partner abuse, as the latter is conceived of in this study, comes from comparative descriptions of the two, put forward to support the existence of husband battering. Straus (1993), in defending his assertion that both women and men use physical violence to coerce, suggests that

¹⁰This was assessed via the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979), a self-report inventory that measures the presence and frequency of aggressive behaviours.

¹¹It is interesting to note that Straus & Gelles (1986) originally noted this limitation of their own research. However Straus (1993) in particular has subsequently continued to argue that wife-husband violence is a major social problem.

a man may typically hit or threaten to hit to force some specific behaviour on pain of injury, whereas a woman may typically slap a partner or pound on his chest as an expression of outrage or in frustration because of his having turned a deaf ear to repeated attempts to discuss some critical issue...(p. 78).

The male and female behaviours described in this scenario are clearly not comparable. While they may both be considered as behavioural acts of physical violence, the male's behaviour is clearly a more powerful person's tactic to control and dominate, in comparison to the female's, perhaps ineffectual, attempt to be heard or express frustration.

Steinmetz and Lucca (1988, p. 233), two other prominent advocates of husband battering, similarly cite the following illustration of the phenomenon, which originally appeared in a newspaper article entitled *Battered husbands need help*:

My wife started out hitting me and when I restrained her she started kicking and that's when she did the damage...what I remember was her kicking the bottom of my foot, kicking my legs, it did hurt...I have always felt more powerful than her and knowing that if I started hitting her I could hurt her, I made a conscious effort...to rule out physical violence (Brown, 1982).

Few abused women would be in a position to restrain their partner and few would report always, or even ever, having felt more powerful than their abuser.

Although any acts of physical violence within the family, or elsewhere, by either males or females are problematic, they cannot in themselves be considered as constituting abuse, as it is understood within this study. This is not to say that female *domination* of male partners *never* occurs, or that women may not commonly perpetrate abuse towards other family members, for example towards children. At this point in time, however, there is no empirical warrant to suggest that a problem of husband battering exists that is comparable to the problem of male perpetrated heterosexual partner abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1988).

In consideration of the arguments presented in this section, for the purposes of this thesis the problem of MAFP will be identified as

a pattern of coercive and violent behaviours whereby a man seeks to dominate his female partner's thoughts, beliefs or conduct, or to punish the partner for resisting his control over her. Individual acts of physical or psychological violence do not constitute MAFP. Physical violence is not MAFP unless it results in the enhanced domination of the batterer over the recipient.¹²

Mutual battering (Gelles, 1974) is another notion that has also recently received attention within the family abuse literature. *Mutual battering* purports to refer to a

¹²This definition was developed in relation to lesbian battering (Card, 1995; Hart, 1986) and has been modified and used here to define MAFP.

situation where any particular incident of violence is said to involve both the male and female partners as joint initiators and equal participants. Within the conceptualisation of abuse adhered to in this study, which focuses on domination rather than physical acts, mutual abuse is, however, not possible (Card, 1995). Mutual *physical violence* may be possible, but mutual *domination* is not, for it is a contradiction in terms. Two people cannot simultaneously dominate each another.

It is noted at this point, that although it would be preferable to limit the present study to theories which attempt to explain abuse as defined above, this would preclude almost all of the current theories in the field. For almost all existing theories delineate the problem to be explained in terms of acts of physical violence. For pragmatic reasons this study will, therefore, consider all available theories related to the problem, including those that define the problem primarily in terms of acts of physical violence.

1.5 RESEARCH INTO CAUSES OF MALE-FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE

The provision of effective treatments of MAFP and longer term preventions is seen as a major research goal by both researchers (Gelles & Loseke, 1993) and those who work with the perpetrators and victims of the abuse (Fanslow, 1992). The possibility of successfully intervening in MAFP depends on effecting change based on an understanding of how things work, and for this, knowledge of the relevant causal mechanisms is often essential (Haig, 1992). In relation to treatment interventions, knowledge of causal mechanisms is not always essential, for what causes a behaviour is not necessarily what maintains behavioural change. However, knowledge of causal mechanisms is always necessary for primary prevention. The majority of research in the field of MAFP, both empirical and theoretical, has in fact focused on attempts to elucidate the relevant causal mechanisms of MAFP. This current study will similarly be concerned with etiology, in light of its importance for intervening in, and in particular, preventing the problem of MAFP.

1.6 THEORETICAL RESEARCH ON CAUSES OF MALE-FEMALE PARTNER ABUSE

During 1992, the Injury Prevention Unit at the University of Auckland, as a result of a process of community consultation, identified various research priorities relating to violence towards women. One priority identified was that research undertaken in the area should have practical implications for the victims, and be more than an academic exercise (Fanslow, 1992).

As a result of the pressure on researchers to demonstrate the immediate relevance and usefulness of their findings, as well as the funding and publishing reward systems that operate in the area, etiological research in the field of family abuse has tended to be empirical rather than theoretical (Breines and Gordon, 1983; O'Leary & Vivian, 1990; Yllö, 1993). At first glance, focus on theory might seem esoteric and of interest only to those who are interested in MAFP as an abstract problem to be studied, rather than to those who define it as a practical and political problem to be resolved (Gelles & Loseke, 1993). Perceiving theoretical work as unrelated to practical solutions may, however, have the effect of impeding the advancement of knowledge and thereby the development of effective interventions. For theoretical and empirical research are complementary but distinct and equally important components of research geared to provide practical solutions. Empirical research is critical to establish phenomena or robust empirical regularities. Non-empirical, or theoretical research, is essential to generate and develop theories to explain these phenomena, as well as to explicate and evaluate those theories. These theoretical tasks are particularly important in relation to intervention, because a lot of what is significant in relation to understanding the world, cannot be perceived directly by empirical means (Haig, 1996).

1.7 AIMS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Within the field of family abuse, the research community and its consequent literature has traditionally been fragmented. Different scholarly disciplines and research communities publish in, and read, different journals, attend different conferences and meetings, and work in near isolation from other scholars (Ohlin & Tonry, 1989). This disunity has at times erupted into open hostility, perhaps due to the very nature of the problem of MAFP, including the intensity of emotion that it arouses, and the urgent need for its resolution. Some researchers refuse to attend the same conferences or allow their work to be published in the same books as others, and there have even been allegations of death threats between those working in the field (Gelles & Loseke, 1993).

The general lack of unity has had significant consequences in terms of theory construction in the field of MAFP, leading generally to the impoverishment of theory (Ohlin & Tonry, 1989; Yllö, 1993). For theory construction within the field of MAFP to progress, there is a clear need for well confirmed, comprehensive theories which begin to integrate theoretical explanations from within, and outside of psychology (Krauss & Krauss, 1995; Renzetti, 1994). Continued theoretical disunity has additional consequences in terms of intervention. Without an integrated theoretical understanding, strategies for intervention and prevention will tend to be fragmented and less effective.

This thesis will contribute to theory construction in the field of MAFP in four major ways: (i) by identifying and organizing existing theories of MAFP; (ii) by clearly explicating, or making explicit the explanation that each theory of MAFP is providing; (iii) by evaluating these explanations, and (iv) by providing a new integrated theory of MAFP. Chapter Two will outline and justify in detail the methodological approach that will be taken in this thesis to achieve these goals. Chapter Three will provide some of the background empirical data that will be needed for subsequent theory appraisal. Chapters Four through Seven will directly explicate and appraise a comprehensive and representative selection of the etiological theories of MAFP that currently appear in the literature. Finally, Chapter Eight will provide an integrated theory of MAFP, developed from the theories which have been shown to have the most explanatory and social value.

1.8 PERSONAL INTEREST AND AIMS

Although this thesis is presented as part of a psychology degree, it is strongly influenced by feminist perspectives. I have had a long-standing interest in the problem of MAFP, having spent a number of years working for, and being involved with, Women's Refuge and other feminist organisations. My personal aim is to increase my own understanding of the problem of MAFP and to challenge my own ideas as much as any of the ideas that appear in the literature.¹³

I have myself been the partner of an abusive man. Although it is unlikely that a disinterested body of researchers are doing all the research on MAFP, few authors indicate that they have had any such experience. Women scholars may fear intellectual marginalization as a result of the general acceptance of the stereotypes of *battered women*. It is, however, important to acknowledge my own experience, because scholarly silence perpetuates the social stereotypes that consign women who have had abusive partners (and men who are abusive), to the *other* category (Mahoney, 1991). MAFP can then be falsely portrayed as a problem about other people that academics research.

¹³Lloyd-Pask & McMaster (1991) suggest that little research is read widely outside of academic circles and that, therefore, no one other than academics, in terms of their career advancement, may benefit from the research exercise. While this may in large part be true, the knowledge that the researcher gains during the process of the research could potentially later have practical significance outside of academia. For example, the researcher could utilize this knowledge to provide effective prevention and treatment programmes for MAFP.

1.9 WOMEN PARTNERS OF ABUSIVE MEN

A significant proportion of the literature in the field of MAFP focuses on the women partners of abusive men, and the question of why they remain in abusive relationships. Various causal theories have been put forward, including: female masochism (Scott, 1974; Shainess, 1977), entrapment (Brockner & Rubin, 1985), learned helplessness (Walker, 1984), cognitive deconstruction (Ward, Wilson, Polaschek, & Hudson, 1995), self-blaming causal attributes (Holtzworth-Munroe, 1988), battered woman syndrome (Walker, 1979), the investment model (Rusbolt & Martz, 1995), the Stockholm syndrome (Graham, Rawlings & Rimini, 1988), and coercive control theory (Okun, 1986).

Feminists have generally been critical of the focus in this field on the question of why women stay, when in other research fields, such in the sexual abuse or general criminology areas, repeated victimisation has not generally received such attention. The focus in this area on the question of why women stay, has effectively resulted in women partners being implicated in, or held responsible for, their own abuse. In recognition that MAFP is a problem that is not the responsibility of its victims, this study will, in considering causal explanations of MAFP, not include theories that attempt to explain why women remain in abusive relationships.

It is important to note, however, that an understanding of why women stay in abusive situations may be essential, when working to support women partners to increase their own safety and gain control over their own lives. Two particularly promising theories in this regard are the *Stockholm syndrome theory* (Graham et al., 1988), and the *coercive control theory* (Okun, 1986). These theories consider that an abused woman's situation is very similar to the situation of others who have been subjected to *thought reform*, for example, the person who is brainwashed, who is held hostage, who is interned in a concentration camp, or who succumbs to an authoritarian religious cult. These theories show how domestic abuse offenders in fact employ many of the same tactics as those documented in the literature on thought reform, such as confinement, social isolation, beatings, humiliation, total control of time and space, and random and unpredictable leniency or kindness coupled with random and unpredictable punishment (Graham et al., 1988; Okun, 1986). Another indication of the potential value of these theories in the MAFP field is that they explain many of the features or phenomena that occur in women who have been abused, features which also occur in other victims of thought reform, including the fear of escaping the controlling situation, child-like dependency on (or bonding to) the controller, and the maintenance of the hope that the controller will be kind and just (Graham et al., 1988; Okun, 1986).

Considering women partners of abusive men alongside other victims of thought reform can also be recommended because it is explicitly non-blaming of women victims. This form of conceptualisation does not suggest that MAFP happens only to a certain type of women. In the body of literature that relates to *thought reform* there has been no attention focused on victim's attributes, in direct contrast to the literature on MAFP. Rather, in the thought reform literature, the situation of coercive control is taken as sufficient explanation for its psychological impact; no predisposition to succumb to brainwashing is considered as necessary or even relevant (Okun, 1986).

1.10 A TERMINOLOGICAL NOTE

As Koss et al. (1994) argue, descriptive terms used in research must be chosen carefully and backed up by clear rationales. This is because terms exclude as well as include, and may also have many unintended connotations. There are many terms used in the literature to describe male abuse of female partners. It is variously referred to as *domestic violence*, *family violence*, *family abuse*, *wife abuse*, *wife battering*, *spouse abuse* and *partner abuse*.

Terms which suggest *violence* are inadequate to describe abuse, as they place the emphasis solely on physical violence. When the term *violence* is used within this study it will specifically refer to physical acts of violence only. Although the term *abuse* has been criticized because of its ambiguity (Smith, 1990), it will be used in this study because it indicates a context rather than a behavioural act.

The term *wife abuse* can be criticized because it takes the emphasis away from the perpetrators of the violence and places it on the victims. Also, much of the male abuse of female partners takes place outside of the institution of marriage. Although other terms such as *spouse abuse* and *partner abuse* acknowledge male abuse of female partners outside of the institution of marriage, they make invisible same-sex partnerships and same-sex partner abuse, because they are inevitably used to denote heterosexual partner abuse.

The use of generic terms such as *domestic violence*, *family violence*, *family abuse*, *spouse abuse* and *partner abuse* to denote male violence towards female partners, is of particular concern because it obscures who is the perpetrator and who is the victim (Bograd, 1988). These terms imply that violence and abuse by children towards adults, or women towards men, are as equally prevalent and problematic as that perpetrated by adults towards children, or men towards women. In the present study the term *Male Abuse of Female Partners* (MAFP) will generally be used, although

in presenting and explicating the particular theories in the following chapters, the terminology used by the advocates will be adhered to.

Within the sexual abuse literature, men who sexually abuse and rape children and women are routinely referred to as *sex offenders*, even when they have had no contact with the criminal justice system. Referring to them as *offenders* is a reflection of the seriousness of their actions. In recognition of this, the term *partner abuse offender* will, therefore, be used in this thesis when referring to men who are abusive towards their female partners. Women who are abused by their male partners will be referred to as *women partners of abusive men*, which emphasizes that the problem lies with the abusive male, rather than the partner. Use of the term *battered women* is to be avoided because it directs attention to the battered woman, as a certain type of woman, and deflects attention from the batterer (Card, 1995).

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The ultimate aim of this study is to provide an integration of some of the best existing theories of MAFP. This chapter will outline and justify the methodological approach that will be adopted in this thesis. It will be seen that the particular approach adopted has evolved from both feminist and scientific realist origins. The feminist approach has not commonly been considered alongside a scientific realist theory of science. However, scientific realism, and evolutionary naturalistic realism (Hooker, 1987) in particular, have many methodological similarities with some feminist approaches. There is, therefore, good reason for considering the two as compatible and complementary, and for utilising them simultaneously. They both stress, for example, that scientific research must have practical and social value as well as recognising and emphasising the value-laden nature of the scientific enterprise and its products.

Any attempt at theory integration must be preceded, firstly, by theory explication. Theory explication involves clearly elucidating explanations and identifying the significant properties of theories. This exercise clarifies what theories are actually saying, for the purpose of subsequent theory evaluation, and also aids in classifying theories. Classifying theories makes it apparent where each theory stands in relation to the others, and serves to guide and facilitate ongoing theory development and integration (Ward & Hudson, 1998).

A second prerequisite of theory integration must be theory evaluation. Theory integration does not involve theoretical eclecticism, for this approach clearly fails to discriminate the value of differing theoretical positions. Rather, it requires the comparative evaluation of theories, according to certain justifiable criteria, so as to identify the best or most valuable theories which are worthy of further development and/or integration.

This chapter will be divided into three sections. The first section will focus on theory explication and outline and justify the particular approach taken in this study towards explicating the various theories of MAFP. The second section will consider how theories can best be evaluated and will outline and justify the approach taken to theory evaluation in this research. The third section of this chapter will specifically consider theory development and theory integration and will justify the approach taken in this study towards these related tasks.

2.1 THEORY EXPLICATION: WHAT DOES A THEORY SAY AND WHAT TYPE OF EXPLANATION DOES IT PROVIDE?

The first stage in theory construction must be an articulation or explication of the existing theories at hand, for to change and develop theories necessarily involves a conception and understanding of what they currently are. Theory explication is in fact, not as simple a task as it might first appear. Although there may be a prolific literature published on any one theory, often the more basic details of the explanation itself are not explicitly set out, or they are at different times presented as contradictory. A critical task of theory construction is, therefore, to identify exactly what theories are saying, and to make explicit their underlying theoretical assumptions (Ohlin & Tonry, 1989).

Within this study the various theories of MAFP will be explicated along the following five dimensions. Any explication is obviously constrained to some extent by theory evaluation criteria, for what is deemed important in evaluative terms in part drives any explicative analysis. As will become evident over the course of this chapter, the characterization of these five dimensions is heavily influenced by the feminist/scientific realist approach taken in this thesis.

2.1.1 The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

Each theory of MAFP identifies, or defines, MAFP as a particular type of problem or phenomenon. Different theories identify different problem behaviours, such as physical acts or systematic patterns of abuse, as well as different perpetrators, and/or different parameters of the problem. In terms of the parameters of the problem, MAFP may be considered as part of a wider problem of all violence or abuse towards all people, as part of a more general problem of family violence, or as part of the general problem of men's abuse of women. Alternatively, it may be considered as a problem distinct from all other problems of violence or abuse. Although the present study will not limit itself to those theories which also identify the problem of MAFP as is defined in this study, it will, in each theory explication, identify what problem each theory is actually attempting to explain to illustrate how the problem is diversely defined in the field.

2.1.2 The Explanation

This section will provide a clear and concise account of how each particular theory explains MAFP, as the authors specifically conceive of the problem. Clearly any attempt to provide the definitive statement of a theoretical perspective is hampered by the fact that different proponents of any one theory inevitably provide subtly different explanations. Generally, the common themes of the explanations subsumed under any

major theory will be focused on. Where, however, one version of the explanation predominates, this explanation may receive sole consideration.

2.1.3 The Deconstructed Explanation

Each explanation will be deconstructed, to make explicit the fundamental, and often implicit, assumptions upon which the explanation lies, and also to make explicit any auxiliary assumptions. It will be noted, for example, whether theories assume that causes lie within individuals, families and/or societies, and whether MAFP is considered to be a result of normal or abnormal mechanisms or behaviours. It will also be noted whether theories presuppose that all or some people are born with the capacity for violence, or whether violence is taken as a learned behaviour. Furthermore, it will be noted whether an explanation relies on innate male and female differences, and what its assumptions are regarding intention and choice, and/or the conscious or unconscious nature of the processes integral in MAFP. Finally, it will be noted whether the behaviour is assumed to be a result of state or transitory structures or mechanisms, or a result of trait or more permanent structures or mechanisms.

Deconstructing an explanation is an important aspect of theory explication. This task makes explicit any implicit aspects of the theory so that they can be openly evaluated. It also explicitly provides important information which can be utilized for later theory evaluation. It needs to be noted, however, that virtually none of the current theories of MAFP make these critical assumptions explicit. Most often these have to be inferred from general writings, which frequently on close inspection can appear contradictory. As a result any attempts to make these assumptions explicit must at this stage be seen as tentative and part of the ongoing process of theory construction. Where these assumptions are explicitly stated in the theoretical writings, they will be referenced. Non-referenced assumptions will, therefore, have been inferred from the general writings.

2.1.4 The Type of Explanation

Proximal and Distal Causes

Ward & Hudson (1998) present a useful framework for characterising theories according to the proximal or distal nature of their explanation.¹⁴ Distal factors are said to comprise predisposition or vulnerability causal factors that emerge from genetic inheritance or developmental experience. Theories of distal causes are concerned with providing more macro level explanations. Theories of proximal causation focus on micro-explanations and are said to be state variables that are the result of underlying

¹⁴This framework was developed in relation to theory in the sexual offending area, which Ward & Hudson (1998) argue has also suffered from the lack of a coherent approach to theory construction.

psychological mechanisms,¹⁵ or contextual or precipitating situational factors that trigger underlying vulnerabilities.

The proximal/distal distinction is best considered as a continuum, for whether a causal factor is distal or proximal in nature is essentially a matter of degree (Ward & Hudson, 1998). Levels of analysis such as these do not compete, but are best understood as relating to interrelated nested truths (Scarr, 1985). Classifying theories according to the proximal or distal nature of their explanation is an important aspect of theory explication as it provides a basis or framework to guide the process of theory integration (Ward & Hudson, 1998).

Level of Development

Theories can also be classified in terms of their level of development; that is, in terms of whether they are rudimentary or mature, well developed theories. Some theories are single factor theories based around a single core construct, whereas others are multifactorial, integrated theories. Some theories exist only as a rudimentary frameworks, whereas others are extensively detailed regarding the various causal mechanisms and their relationship to one another. Almost without exception within the field of MAFP, the existing theories are rudimentary and extremely poorly developed. They also tend to be single factor theories.

Instrumentalist or Realist Theory

Instrumentalist and realist theories are two broad interpretations of theory, that in psychology and other sciences are held to be in opposition (Haig, 1996). Instrumentalist theories, which are generally the goals of empiricist and positivistic science, are essentially summary or systematising devices for representing observable data in a minimal number of terms. These theories appeal to empirical regularities which by the process of induction, become laws (McMullin, 1978). Instrumentalist theories cannot be said to provide true *explanations* because they do not refer to causal mechanisms.

In contrast to instrumentalist theories, realist theories, which are the goals of scientific realist science, are true explanations, for they appeal to underlying causal mechanisms, which have not been observed, but are postulated to be causally responsible for what is observed. As scientific realism emphasizes, much that is important about understanding the world, cannot be perceived directly. Knowledge, therefore, has to come to us by way of theories, and scientific realist rather than instrumental theories are the best way to develop this knowledge about the world (Haig, 1996). This is because many of the world's causal mechanisms are hidden from our

¹⁵For example irritability is the state variable which is a consequence of a dismissive-avoidant attachment style and this irritability may trigger the disinhibition of control over antisocial behaviour (Ward & Hudson, 1998).

direct view, so if we want to know about the world, and change it, rather than settle for an account of its surface features we must fashion deep-structural or postulational theories that attempt to access the relevant causal mechanisms and get closer to the way things are (Haig, 1996). This scientific realistic approach is justifiable in terms of the cognitive features of humans as knowers. Their fallible senses, rich imaginations and considerable power of criticism, means that the only realistic strategy available to humans for advancing knowledge is to construct and evaluate theories which appeal to underlying causal mechanisms (Haig, 1996).

Gelles (1983) suggests, that in the research area of MAFP, the majority of theories are in fact instrumentalist theories, based on summaries of observable factors found to be related to, or predictive of, MAFP. As the only way to access causal explanations is via the postulation, development and critical evaluation of theories that refer to unobserved underlying causal mechanisms, only realist theories will be fully explicated and evaluated in this study.

2.1.5 Applications

The differing etiological assumptions about MAFP postulated by the various theories provide the rationale for different methods of dealing with the problem of MAFP. Some theories imply treatment approaches for domestic abuse offenders. Others suggest prevention approaches, which usually involve changes on the larger social scale. Still other theories have no practical application at all. This section will identify and outline the interventions that each theory suggests, both explicit and implied. Determining a theory's practical application is an important prerequisite for later theory evaluation based upon practical utility.

2.2 THEORY EVALUATION: WHAT IS A GOOD THEORY?

Theory evaluation is an activity that in essence involves attempting to work out which are the best of the competing theories. Within inductivism, theories are evaluated in terms of warranted inductions (Haig, 1996). The theories or laws which describe empirical regularities are confirmed by positive instances of those laws, and the degree of confirmation is proportional to the number of observed positive instances (Greenwood, 1982).

Within psychology most theory evaluation is conducted within a hypothetico-deductive framework, where it consists almost solely of testing for empirical adequacy. Here a theory is evaluated on the basis of single sets of data analysed by statistical methods. More properly, however, a theory should be evaluated in relation to

be given to theories that are economical and therefore make fewer special assumptions. Simplicity is a constraint on explanatory breadth, in that explanatory breadth must not be achieved at the expense of simplicity; that is, by relying on a lot of special assumptions. The third criterion of explanatory coherence is analogy. Explanations are judged more coherent if they are supported by analogy to theories that are already considered credible; that is, if they utilize mechanisms, entities or concepts already accepted in established explanations. Basically the broader, the simpler and the more analogous to other explanations a theory is, in relation to its rivals, the more coherent and therefore superior is the explanation that it provides. As the criterion of explanatory breadth is considered to be the most critical in choosing the best explanation, this will be the focus of the evaluations of explanatory coherence in this study, although issues relating to simplicity and analogy may be noted. In particular any significant auxiliary assumptions, that impinge on the simplicity of the explanation, will be noted.

Chapter Three in this study will focus on examining the literature pertinent to MAFP, with the aim of identifying phenomena that can be later utilized in the task of evaluating theories according to their explanatory breadth. It is noted that this explanatory approach to theory evaluation involves a coherentist, rather than foundationalist, justification. It is not aiming for bedrock foundations such as secure observations, but is looking to justify knowledge claims in terms of how they relate together in a consistent way. It is a reasonable approach in light of the fact that inference to the best explanation is a form of reasoning that is successfully used in many scientific and everyday explanations (Thagard, 1992).

2.2.2 Practical Utility

Thagard's account of theory evaluation focuses in particular on evaluating explanations according to their explanatory breadth. Science and theory construction, however, legitimately pursue other valuable goals in addition to providing coherent explanations, such as providing knowledge with practical and social value.

Consistent with the political aims of the feminist movement, one of the most common features of feminist methodology is the belief that the purpose of knowledge is to improve people's lives, particularly the lives of women as an oppressed group (Cook & Fonow, 1986). Evolutionary naturalistic realism, like feminism, is also concerned with providing valuable knowledge. With its commitment to the philosophy of *fundamentalism*,¹⁶ it suggests that the superordinate aim of science should be to solve the world's most urgent global problems (Maxwell, 1987). The abuse of women by their

¹⁶This philosophy is not related to Christian fundamentalism.

male partners, as a part of the more general problem of social inequality, is clearly an urgent global social problem. In the current feminist/scientific realist theory evaluation, theories will, therefore, also be evaluated in terms of their practical utility, which will be assessed according to the following dimensions.

The Intervention Implications

Theories will be evaluated according to whether or not they can potentially be translated into meaningful action to improve the lives of women, by way of suggesting treatments for domestically abusive men, or efforts to prevent MAFP from occurring in the first place. Some theories suggest non-modifiable causal factors and so do not imply any direct treatment/prevention techniques.¹⁷ These theories would, therefore, be evaluated as having significantly less value than those that suggest modifiable causal factors.

The Type of Intervention Suggested

If theories are shown to have practical application, they will then be further evaluated according to how useful and effective their suggested interventions could be. Theories can be broadly divided into those that suggest primary prevention, and those that suggest the treatment of individually abusive men.

Primary prevention is the ideal or ultimate form of intervention (Sedlak, 1988). Theories that suggest only treatment interventions for domestically abusive offenders offer, in effect, an expedient, individualistic, and short term solution to the problem of MAFP (Lloyd-Pask & McMaster, 1991). To eradicate MAFP in the long-term, and thereby ensure real improvements in women's lives, the major goal of intervention must be to provide primary preventions (Goodman et. al., 1993). Within this study, theories that generate preventative efforts will, therefore, be evaluated as having more value than those which solely generate treatment approaches.

The practical utility of a theory of MAFP would also, ideally, be judged in terms of the effectiveness of the interventions that the theory suggests. Although successful theory-derived treatments do not necessarily indicate that the originating theory is true, what they do indicate is that it has practical value, and is, therefore, worthy of further consideration and/or development.

Treatment effectiveness is usually assessed by way of treatment outcome evaluation studies. At this point in time, by far the most frequently evaluated

¹⁷It is noted that it could be argued that theories which suggest non-modifiable causal factors do in fact suggest an intervention technique; the removal of the perpetrator from the offending situation. More often, however, theories which suggest non-modifiable causal factors have conservative implications; they are taken to mean that nothing can be done about the problem.

interventions for domestic abuse offenders, are short-term groups treatments, based on cognitive-behavioural techniques, usually in combination with profeminist content on sex-role socialization and male privilege (Tolman & Bennett, 1990). Reviews of these studies have indicated that the successful outcome of these treatments has ranged from 53% to 85% (Edleson, 1996). These findings, however, must be interpreted with a high degree of caution, due to the methodological shortcomings evident in these studies, which may have produced inflated measures of success (Edleson, 1996; Tolman & Bennett, 1990). These evaluation studies have, for example, frequently ignored the non-physical aspects of MAFP, and thereby women partner's own definitions of treatment success and safety (Edleson, 1996). They have also usually measured success in terms of reductions of abuse rather than total cessation, ignoring the real possibility that reductions of incidents of abuse will not alter the overall climate of domination, end the terror that abused women feel as a result of abuse, or create genuine safety for women (Edleson, 1996).

In the evaluation studies to date it is also noteworthy that lower rates of success have tended to occur in programs with lengthier follow-up, and when success was based on reports by women victims rather than official arrest rates or men's self-reports (Edleson, 1996). Furthermore, currently success is usually measured in relation only to those men who complete treatment programmes, and is commonly measured in terms of statistically significant decreases in violent behaviour. Both these ways of measuring treatment effectiveness operate to produce inflated measures of change.

As a result of these methodological shortcoming, a high degree of caution must be taken in assuming that the evaluation studies carried out to date have identified a phenomenon relating to the success of these treatments. Furthermore, even if it is accepted that these evaluation studies have identified the success of these treatment programs, this finding would only be of limited value for this current study. This is because these studies have only evaluated the one general cognitive-behavioural/feminist type treatment, and assessing the practical utility of theory derived treatments in this study would require comparative treatment evaluations.

Some theories suggest primary preventions and in this study these theories would also ideally be further evaluated according to the success of their policy/social implications. Evaluating preventative efforts is, however, considerably more complicated than evaluating treatment outcomes, and has not been attempted to date. Preventative efforts often relate to major changes which will need to be measured or evaluated over the long term; they cannot be quickly or easily achieved.

General Social and Political Implications

In the absence of any reliable or comparative treatment or prevention outcome studies, within this current study, a theory's practical utility will primarily be evaluated on the basis of: (i) its potential ability to be translated into meaningful practical action, (ii) its potential ability to suggest preventative interventions rather than solely treatment interventions and, (iii) its more general social and political implications. Although some MAFP theorists argue that their theories are descriptive and not prescriptive (see for example, Buss, 1995a, 1996), the line separating descriptive from normative discourse is far from clear. Claims that science is apolitical and value-free may merely conceal the ways in which science supports certain groups in society and maintains the status-quo (Peplau & Conrad, 1989). Theory evaluation can, therefore, reasonably involve a consideration of the values that a theory promotes as well as its general social implications.



2.2.3 Conceptual Coherence

An important aspect of theory evaluation is to identify any conceptual or logical inconsistencies inherent in the explanations offered. This may involve noting the ambiguity of various terms or concepts, or noting any contradictions or gaps in a theory that detract from its overall conceptual coherence. Furthermore, it may involve noting whether an explanation has any redundant parts that do not contribute to either its explanatory breadth or practical utility, or whether it has any parts that particularly require further development.

The following chapters will evaluate the major realist theories of MAFP according to their explanatory breadth, practical utility and conceptual coherence. At times there will likely be tensions between the three components of evaluation. For example, one theory may have high explanatory breadth, but low practical utility. It is expected that theories will compare differentially in terms of the three criteria. It also needs to be noted that generally these criteria of theory evaluation relate to theory acceptance, not the truth of a theory, for the pursuit of understanding requires the provisional acceptance of explanatory theories that may turn out in the future to be wrong (Thagard, 1989). Knowledge is therefore warranted conjectural theory where the warrant is provided by the methods that are used to evaluate theories (Haig, 1996).

2.3 THEORY GENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Within the standard empiricist framework, science is primarily concerned with what is directly observable. Knowledge is believed to be best advanced by way of empirical research, and the resulting theories are purely instrumental devices. Within

the empiricist, inductive method, theory development occurs by way of theory accumulation; that is, the accumulation of empirical generalisations. Within the dominant empiricist, hypothetico-deductive framework, theories are accepted or rejected on the strength of their empirical predictions and only those theories survive whose predictions best fit with the empirical data (Kalmer & Sternberg, 1988). This approach involves a commitment to *theoretical monism* which is the view that knowledge advances in a particular domain when research efforts over time converge towards a single theory that is maximally supported by the evidence (Haig, 1996).

This empiricist approach, however, has many undesirable consequences in relation to the development of theories and the advancement of knowledge generally. It collapses theory development into theory evaluation in terms of empirical adequacy, and as a result thereby precludes the possibility of actually further developing rudimentary theories, or of producing theories that move beyond the observable realm. This approach also encourages the routine setting up of theories in opposition to one another, when they may in reality be complementary or overlapping (Kalmer & Sternberg, 1988).

Amongst others, Kuhn (1970) and Laudan (Laudan, 1977; Laudan et al., 1986) share an alternative viewpoint regarding the progress of science. This is that science progresses on the basis of metaphysical, and other non-scientific, sociological factors. Scientific change and the growth of knowledge according to this view cannot be rationally reconstructed and does not progress to an end point like truth. Progress is instead considered to be characterized by changing consensus. Although scientific realists acknowledge the social constructionist concern for the social and institutional dimensions of scientific progress and knowledge, they maintain that the progress of knowledge does involve identifiable rational components.

For the scientific realist, theory generation and theory development provides the primary route to the advancement of knowledge, and scientific realism is, therefore, committed to theoretical pluralism. Theoretical pluralism is the view that knowledge is best advanced by generating a plurality of theories which are developed through critical interplay (Haig, 1996). One of the ultimate or orienting aims of scientific realist science and theory development is, therefore, to pursue the integration of the best of these theories to produce internally global theories. These are mature large-scale theories which exhibit the systemic feature of integrating their numerous components into a conceptual framework (Haig, 1996; Hooker, 1975). All theories can be considered to be more or less global. Small-scale theories can be viewed as being largely externally global theories, because they make heavy use of outside theories (Hooker, 1975).

Approaching knowledge development, via the critical interplay and integration of theories, recommends itself on various levels. It recognizes that much that is worth knowing about the world is not observable and it also allows and encourages a realistic conception of MAFP as a complex problem, with multiple interrelated causes. Attempts to provide an integrated explanatory theory of MAFP are particularly important, because without a unified theory, strategies for intervention and prevention will tend to become fragmented and less effective. This approach also encourages the idea of theory complementarity, in addition to theory opposition, and helps promote links across disciplines.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPLANATORY BREADTH

As noted in the previous chapter, one of the key elements of theory appraisal that will be employed in this study is explanatory breadth (Thagard, 1978, 1989, 1992). Explanatory breadth is based on the notion that a theory has more explanatory breadth, and hence more value than its rivals, when it explains a greater range of facts or phenomena. This current chapter will focus on identifying important phenomena in the field of MAFP, which will then be utilized in subsequent chapters for the task of evaluating theories according to their explanatory breadth.

MAFP is a relatively recent topic of empirical research, but in its brief history the facts of the topic have been the source of considerable debate, for there are a number of significant methodological problems in the field that frequently constrain any definitive statements being made (Sedlak, 1988). For one, this research almost entirely focuses on, and attempts to generalize from, non-indigenous, white people in western developed nations, in particular North America, to other countries and cultures (Ferraro, 1990). This research has also almost exclusively focused on men who have been publicly identified as partner abusers, either through the criminal justice system or through their participation in treatment programmes, when these men are unlikely to be the same as the large numbers of domestically abusive men who do not apply these labels to themselves or speak of their experiences (Margolin, Sibner, & Gleberman, 1988). This body of research is also generally hindered by the private nature of the family (Dutton, 1995a), the reliance on retrospective self-reports (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980) and the focus on acts of physical violence.

As a result of the various methodological limitations outlined above, and the fact that the research field is still relatively young, it is generally difficult to identify any well established empirical findings in the field of MAFP. However, there a group of facts in the field that are *relatively* robust and which for the purposes of this study will be treated as phenomena. The remainder of this chapter will focus on identifying these facts. It is important to note, however, that as more empirical research is completed in this field, and as existing empirical regularities are, therefore, found to be more or less robust and/or as new phenomena are established, the related theory appraisals within this study will likely require modification. This is not so much a limitation of the current study, but an expected and accepted part of the process of knowledge and theory development in a relatively new field. Empirical and theoretical research are

interconnected and will progress and develop together. Theoretical research cannot be delayed until all the empirical research is complete. In a relatively new area of empirical study such as this, as research flourishes and as robust empirical regularities are increasingly identified, theories will change and develop accordingly. Similarly, as theories develop, this can serve to identify areas where further empirical work is needed.

3.1 INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE

Researchers examining the prevalence of physical abuse in heterosexual couples have found rates of violence ranging from approximately 28% (Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus et al., 1980) to 55% (Gelles, 1974, Gelles & Straus, 1979). This research, however, is of only limited value in relation to the present study, because it reports both male and female perpetrated acts.

In relation specifically to *male* perpetrated acts, overseas research estimates that between 0.2% and 14.4% of women are physically abused by a male partner in a twelve month period, and between 14% and 25% are abused by a male partner at some point in their lives (Leibrich et al., 1995). The only nation-wide New Zealand study to consider prevalence found that 21% of men reported at least one physically abusive act in the past year, and 35% at least one such act in a lifetime. Fifty-three percent of the men reported at least one psychologically abusive act in the past year and 62% at least one such act during their lifetime (Leibrich et al., 1995). Other local New Zealand studies give estimates of 2-3% of Christchurch women being the victims of physical violence from their male partner during one year (Fergusson et al., 1986) to 25% of Hamilton women being a victim of physical assault during their lifetime (Ritchie, 1981).

At this point in time there has been no empirical research on the prevalence of MAFP, considered in terms of domination and control. Within the context of institutionalized male power inherent in the patriarchal system, any male to female acts of physical violence may, however, be likely to constitute abuse in terms of domination and control. Therefore, physical acts of violence by males towards female partners can reasonably be considered as a relatively accurate indicator of the problem of MAFP, although they cannot be considered as equivalent to it.

A related and important empirical fact in the area of MAFP, is that a reasonable proportion of men are not ever abusive towards their female partners. Although a phenomenon is defined as a *surprising* empirical finding (Haig, 1996), the fact that all men do not abuse their female partners will be treated as a phenomenon in this study, as it is an important fact that a number of theories cannot explain.

Phenomenon 1: Male physical violence towards female partners is widespread.

Phenomenon 2: A reasonable proportion of men do not abuse their female partners.

3.2 SOCIALLY ACCEPTED OR NORMATIVE BEHAVIOUR

Violence and control are generally normative and condoned in such pervasive ways as military expenditure and action, through the media (Westhues, 1989), through some sports, and in New Zealand through the acceptability and legality of the physical discipline of children. Goodwin (1994) suggests, however, that there is little evidence to support the view that MAFP is socially normative behaviour. In support of this he argues that in almost all social groups it is totally unacceptable for a man to admit, let alone boast about, the fact that he injured his wife. Dutton (1994) is of a similar view and cites research to suggest that the majority of people never see male violence towards female partners as appropriate.

This conclusion must, however, be considered in relation to norms and attitudes surrounding assaults involving other victims and perpetrators. Evidence suggests that the assault of a women by her male partner is not generally perceived to be as serious as stranger assault (Wolfgang, Figlio, Tracy, & Singer, 1985). People are commonly more reluctant to personally intervene or call the police when faced with an incident of MAFP, compared to an incident of stranger assault. Furthermore, there exist folkways and laws which accept and even mandate the use of violence in families. A commonly cited historical example is the English law *rule of thumb*, which gave husbands the right to strike their wives with sticks no thicker than their thumbs, but did not give the reciprocal right to women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). A more recent legal example, is that MAFP is generally not treated in the same way by the criminal justice system, as violence against other persons. Also within New Zealand, the criminal justice system provides accessible criminal defences for male partner abusers. For example, the defence of *provocation* can be used where the male perpetrator claims, for example, that he was provoked by his partner leaving him or having a sexual relationship with another man. The same system, however, provides no effective legal defence for women partners who have killed or injured their abuser following years of abuse at their hands.

Other indirect evidence also supports the view that MAFP is relatively socially accepted. Although a significant proportion of people say that they do not approve of

MAFP at all, when they are given the explicit details their disapproval dissipates; that is, they accept the abuse of women *in certain specific circumstances* (Leibrich et al., 1995), for example, when a man finds his partner in bed with another man.

Phenomenon 3: Male violence towards a female partner is a comparatively socially normative and socially accepted behaviour.

3.3 THE NOTION OF *HUSBAND BATTERING*

The body of literature relating to this debate was fully reviewed in Chapter One and so will only be very briefly outlined here. The empirical evidence for husband battering is limited in that it is based primarily on the two American national surveys and an inadequate understanding of abuse as one or more *acts of physical violence*. When cases of husband battering are specifically presented by its proponents, it is evident that it is not a similar phenomenon to male abuse of female partners, as considered in this study. Various other sources of data gathered via a variety of methods, which consider meanings and consequences and not just physical acts, have also suggested that men are significantly more *abusive* towards their women partners than women are towards their male partners (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Ferraro, 1990).

Phenomenon 4: Within heterosexual partnerships the most prevalent abuse is perpetrated by men against their female partners rather than by women against their male partners.

3.4 LESBIAN AND GAY PARTNER ABUSE ¹⁸

Up until about 10 years ago lesbian and gay domestic abuse was virtually excluded from academic, clinical, and activist considerations of partner abuse. To date, there have been only four empirical studies carried out in relation to gay partner abuse (Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council, 1987; Gardner, 1989; Island & Letellier, 1991; Kelly & Warshafsky, 1987) and as a consequence no robust empirical findings have emerged.

The subject of lesbian partner abuse has been the focus of comparatively more empirical research (Brand & Kidd, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council, 1987; Gardner, 1989; Kelly & Warshafsky, 1987; Lie, Schilit, Bush, Montagne, & Reyes, 1991; Renzetti, 1988, 1992). These studies have primarily

¹⁸For the purposes of this study, *lesbian* will include female bisexuals, and *gay* (which refers to male homosexuals) will include male bisexuals, when these bisexuals are involved in same sex partnerships.

attempted to estimate prevalence and incidence and, as with other empirical research, have almost entirely focused on acts of physical violence.

Although limited, this early research on lesbian abuse suggests that the prevalence and severity of lesbian partner violence is comparable to that within heterosexual partnerships. Studies on lesbian partner abuse have demonstrated rates of violence in committed lesbian relationships ranging from 22% (Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council, 1987) to 48% (Gardner, 1989). However, because of the limited number of these studies and the various methodological problems from which they suffer, no firm figures on prevalence or incidence can currently be said to exist. It would be reasonable, however, to say that lesbian violence is a significant problem (A. Charlotte, personal communication, October 6, 1997¹⁹; Miller, 1994).

Also of significance, is the fact that current evidence consistently suggests that lesbian partner abuse is strikingly similar in nature to MAFP (A. Charlotte, personal communication, October 6, 1997; Elliot, 1996; Glover, 1993; Hart, 1986; Renzetti, 1992). Like MAFP, lesbian partner abuse appears to be a pattern of violent or coercive behaviours whereby a lesbian seeks to dominate the thoughts, beliefs, or conduct of her intimate partner (Hart, 1986). It also appears to go through similar cycles to MAFP and like MAFP almost always involves sexual jealousy. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that lesbian partner abuse is a similar phenomenon to MAFP.

Phenomenon 5: Lesbian partner abuse is a significant problem and is similar in form to MAFP.

3.5 ATTITUDES TO VIOLENCE

As a result of a recent meta-analysis of 5 studies containing 10 effects, Sugarman & Frankel (1996) found a moderate to strong effect, suggesting that assaultive men's reported attitudes towards the use of *physical* violence within intimate relationships, were more positive than those of non-assaultive men. These studies showed, for example, that the assaultive men perceived their violence to be more normative, more justified, or the responsibility of their partner.

Meta-analysis is a data analytic approach that aims to identify empirical regularities in extant research by computing the average effect size of groups of studies; that is, the average number of standard deviation units that the means are separated by. Although

¹⁹Ann Charlotte is a former core group member of The National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges, and a founding and current member of the Stopping Lesbian Violence Project, New Zealand.

meta-analysis avoids many of the problems inherent in narrative reviews and null hypothesis testing (Meehl, 1990), it should not be considered as a replacement for constructive replication. It incorporates all of the weaknesses of the individual studies, and does not systematically determine generalizability in the manner that replication does. It can, however, be reasonably accepted as evidence of moderately robust empirical findings.

Phenomenon 6: Men who are physically assaultive towards their female partners, report more positive attitudes towards the use of violence in relationships, than do men who are not physically assaultive.

3.6 ADHERENCE TO GENDER ATTITUDES AND GENDER SCHEMA

Sugarman and Frankel (1996) also performed a meta-analysis in relation to gender attitudes (10 studies, 10 effects) and gender schema (7 studies, 14 effects). Gender attitudes were defined as men's attitudes towards gender roles and prescribed behaviours, and men's expectations about women's obedience, deference and loyalty. This included, for example, men's attitudes regarding women's role in taking care of the home and working outside of the house. The meta-analysis reported only a weak to moderate effect relating to violent men's gender attitudes.

Gender schema was defined as the extent to which a man's self-description embodies cultural definitions of male-gender appropriate attributes. This relates to how males conform to traditional masculine cultural requirements, compared to feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated gender orientations. The meta-analysis found no effect in relation to assaultive men's masculine gender schema.

Phenomenon 7: Men who are physically assaultive towards their female partners, do not report notably more conservative attitudes towards women than men who are not physically assaultive.

Phenomenon 8: Men who are physically assaultive towards their female partners do not report notably more masculine gender schema than non-physically assaultive men.

3.7 CLINICAL PHENOMENA

Two important clinical phenomena within the domain of MAFP relate to whom men's violence is directed towards, and to where it occurs. Domestic abuse offenders

are usually exclusively, or at least predominantly, abusive towards their female partners, compared to other adults with whom they do not have an intimate relationship. This finding also includes those men with mental disorders; for example, in one study (Elliot, 1988), 60% of the 286 cases of Episodic Dyscontrol confined their attacks to family members. Domestic abuse offenders are also usually abusive towards their partners in private (Bograd, 1988). Although these simple facts are often taken for granted they are important facts that need to be made explicit for theory appraisal.

Phenomenon 9: Domestic abuse offenders usually direct their abuse exclusively or predominantly towards their female partners.

Phenomenon 10: Domestic abuse offenders generally abuse their partners in private.

3.8 THE GENERATIONAL REPETITION OF ABUSE

The notion of the intergenerational transmission, or cycle, of violence is one that is widely accepted both within the scholarly and popular literatures. This is the notion that adults who abuse their children or partner, were themselves abused as children or witnessed abuse within their home. Widom (1989) suggests, however, that the notion that violence runs in families may not be as robust as is generally thought, because the majority of the empirical studies that have been used to support it have been methodologically weak; they have relied on self-report and retrospective data, have only rarely used control groups. However, as Widom (1989) also acknowledges, a conceptual limitation inherent in this body of research, that may have resulted in the failure to detect an existing phenomena, is the focus on physical abuse. If studies were to consider all forms of abuse, the empirical finding regarding the generational repetition of abuse may well be found to be considerably more robust.

It is generally accepted in the MAFP literature (Coleman, 1994; Holtzworth-Munroe, Smutzler, Bates, & Sandin, 1997; Ohlin & Tonry, 1989; Sedlak, 1988; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988; Walker, 1995), and it will be accepted in this study, that at this point in time the weight of empirical evidence generally leads to the conclusion that growing up in a abusive home increases the likelihood that an adult male will be abusive towards his female partner.

Phenomenon 11: Witnessing and/or experiencing abuse in ones family of origin strongly increases the likelihood that a male as an adult will be abusive towards his female partner himself.

3.9 ALCOHOL

The association or correlation between men's abuse of their women partners and their alcohol use or abuse is widely reported in the MAFP literature (e.g., Bennett, 1995; Byles, 1978; Cleek & Pearson, 1985; Gondolf & Foster, 1991). As in other areas, there are a number of methodological problems in this body of research, including: multiple definitions of alcohol use, with some studies focusing on alcohol ingestion and others on alcohol dependence, abuse or intoxication; multiple definitions of violence or abuse; and the reliance on clinical populations of abusers (Gelles, 1993; Norris, 1987). However, despite these methodological problems, it is reasonable to accept in light of current knowledge that a significant correlation does exist between men's use/abuse of alcohol and their violence towards their female partners.

Phenomenon 12: There is a significant association between men's alcohol use and/or abuse and men's violence towards their female partners.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has identified twelve phenomena; that is, twelve relatively robust empirical findings, that at this point in time, can reasonably be treated as empirical facts in the field of MAFP. The following four chapters of this thesis will explicate the various theories of MAFP and evaluate them in light of these facts.

CHAPTER FOUR

FEMINIST PATRIARCHAL THEORIES

The following four chapters of this thesis will concentrate on explicating and appraising the feminist, psychological, sociological and biological theories of MAFP. It is noted at this point that the organisation of the various theories into the following feminist, biological, psychological, or sociological chapters is somewhat arbitrary. This is because often the theories cannot be clearly placed into one or the other category, as they may, for example, have both psychological and sociological characteristics. Similarly, within each chapter, the organisation of the theories into theory type is also somewhat arbitrary. As this study has attempted to consider all existing theories in the field of MAFP, it has been necessary to organise and group these theories to some extent to make the task manageable. There will also be other ways that these theories could have been organised and grouped.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on the feminist theories of MAFP. Feminists view MAFP as being a problem related to culture, which can be understood as the inherited or learned ideas, values and knowledge which constitutes the shared bases of social actions. Although there has at times been a tendency in the field to place feminist views outside of mainstream science,²⁰ the feminist approach is a legitimate and worthwhile one, and it will be considered in this study alongside other more mainstream approaches.

There is no unified feminist perspective, either generally or specifically on family abuse. Some writers differentiate between radical, Marxist, socialist, liberal and postmodern feminist perspectives of MAFP (Miller, 1994; Steinmetz, 1987), although these different positions are not explicated in any detail within the literature. All feminist theoretical positions, however, contain certain fundamental points of agreement regarding the nature of the problem of MAFP and its explanation. For the purposes of this study the commonalities of the feminist positions will be emphasized and the feminist perspectives will, therefore, be explicated and appraised as a single position.

²⁰For example, feminist researchers in the area have been labelled *feminist fundamentalists* (Erickson, 1992) and have been charged by a prominent sociologist with "inhibiting serious scientific theory construction in the area, by using ideology in the place of scientifically informed theory" (Gelles, 1983, p. 154). Bowker, Arbitell, & McFerron (1988) also draw attention to the comparative difficulty of getting feminist research published in the field and document the blatantly dishonest practices of a journal editor to exclude one of the author's pro-feminist research from being published.

4.1 EXPLICATION OF FEMINIST PATRIARCHAL THEORIES

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

The problem behaviour or phenomenon that feminists identify is men's *domination* of women partners. MAFP is conceived of as any act that causes or forces the victim to do something that she does not want to do, or causes her to be afraid. It is more than a series of disconnected violent or frightening acts. It is a coherent and systematic pattern of coercive controls that include physical violence, sexual violence, emotional and psychological abuse and threats, social isolation, and economic deprivation (Adams, 1989).²¹

The Explanation

- Patriarchy is a key causal mechanism in MAFP (Miller, 1994).²² ²³ Patriarchy is considered to be a form of social organisation and ideology that reflects, creates and maintains an arrangement of domination by males and subordination of females.²⁴ The social organisation is the male dominated hierarchical structure of social institutions and social relations. The ideology, which is the primary component of patriarchy (Millet, 1969), is conceived of as the values, beliefs, and norms in these spheres regarding the normality and legitimacy of male dominance and violence against women who violate the ideals of patriarchy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Smith, 1990).²⁵ Female obedience, respect, loyalty, dependency, sexual access, and sexual fidelity are prominent themes in the ideology of patriarchy (Smith, 1990).

- The ideology of the patriarchal system of organisation is transformed into individual beliefs and attitudes through the process of socialisation. Socialisation thereby instils in men a world view or belief system that portrays male domination and female subordination as just and natural (Pence, 1989). This world view is the sum total of one's thoughts, feelings and beliefs about people and the world, and gives direction,

²¹As a result of this problem identification, feminist research has tended to utilise qualitative methods such as the context specific approach (Dobash & Dobash, 1988). Yllö (1993) suggests that it is this qualitative approach to research, rather than feminist's theoretical perspectives directly, that has led to some of the suspicion towards feminist theory referred to above.

²²Although sociologists often consider patriarchy in their theoretical analyses, they typically perceive it as just one factor among many, whereas patriarchy is primary to feminist analyses (Bograd, 1988).

²³The system of patriarchy is said by feminists to have originated from differences in male and female physical strength and/or the biological fact that women reproduce.

²⁴Patriarchy characterises most societies, past and present, albeit with significant variations in particular historical epochs, under different modes of production, and across cultures, classes, and other social structures (Smith, 1990).

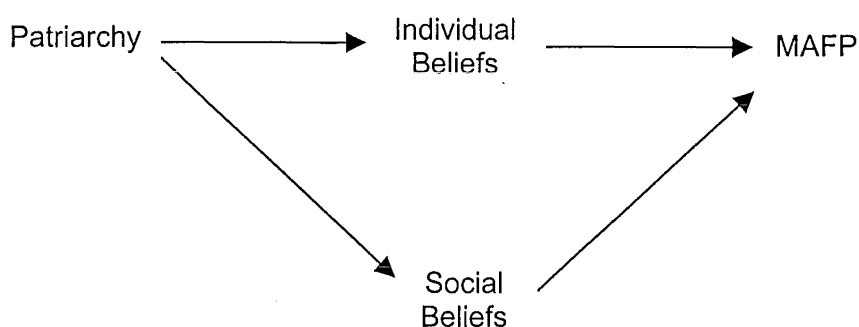
²⁵Patriarchal ideology is dependent on the more fundamental gender ideology, which is the belief or idea that the male and female *genders* are basic, non-artificial metaphysical categories (Goldner, Penn, Sheinberg, & Walker, 1990).

structure and meaning to experiences and interactions, often without us ever being consciously aware of its outline or its content (Sarason, 1981).²⁶

•On the personal/individual level, MAFP is a system of tactics that individual men use to control women's behaviour when they have been socialized into implicitly believing that they have a right to dominate the women in their lives, by whatever means (Walker, 1989). Men who assault their partners are following cultural and legal prescriptions that dictate male dominance and female subordination, and MAFP as a legitimate means to that end (Dutton, 1995a).

•Family members and the wider community, including neighbours, the criminal justice system, churches, health services etc., are also socialized into the world view which prescribes male domination as natural and just. They, therefore, tolerate, give tacit approval to and thereby encourage MAFP.

Figure 1: The Feminist Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The feminist explanations appear to presuppose the following assumptions:

- (a) MAFP is a sociocultural phenomenon related to the patriarchal system of social organisation.
- (b) Patriarchy exists: contemporary social arrangements and ideology favours men.
- (c) MAFP results from the normal psychological and behavioural patterns of men (Bograd, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 1979).
- (d) Males' dominant psychological and behavioural patterns are learned behaviours.
- (e) Patriarchal norms and ideology determine or cause individual men's beliefs.
- (f) Individual men's belief systems are largely unconscious and unreportable.
- (g) Individual men's belief systems drive or cause men's behaviours.

²⁶Sarason (1981) is not a feminist theorist. However, he describes clearly this aspect of feminist theory, which is not as clearly elucidated in feminist writings.

- (h) Individual men's patriarchal belief systems are traits rather than states; that is, they are permanent or semi-permanent structures or mechanisms rather than transitory structures or mechanisms.
- (i) Social acceptance and tolerance of male domination and male domination tactics, reward or reinforce these beliefs and behaviours.
- (j) MAFP is instrumental, purposeful, or intentional behaviour: men make choices about their behaviour, they are not innocent victims of patriarchy (Pence, 1989).

The Type of Explanation

Patriarchy, the social organisation and gender ideology that favours men, is a distal causal factor of MAFP. One proximal cause is individual men's conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings and beliefs about the normality and justness of male domination. Another proximal cause is society's tolerance and thereby encouragement of male dominatory tactics and beliefs.

Feminist theory is usually portrayed as a single factor theory (Gelles, 1983; Gelles & Cornell, 1985), although in reality it incorporates a number of explanatory mechanisms. Contemporary feminist theorists acknowledge, however, that their theory alone cannot provide a complete explanation of MAFP, particularly in relation to individual differences (Yllö, 1993). Feminist theory, like most other contemporary theories of MAFP, is a fairly rudimentary theory. Both patriarchy, and men's thoughts and feelings are postulated as underlying causes of MAFP that are not directly observable. Feminist patriarchal theory is, therefore, a realist explanatory theory and it, therefore, will be evaluated alongside other realist theories.

Applications

Feminist theory principally advocates the primary prevention or eradication of MAFP, but also advocates simultaneously working towards the treatment of individual domestically abusive men. Feminist preventions aim to eradicate MAFP by addressing the fundamental or root causes of MAFP itself: the structures and practices of patriarchy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Efforts to end the patriarchal system would focus on macro social changes to ideology and attitudinal norms relating specifically to notions of male superiority and the acceptability of MAFP. There would also be changes in the redistribution of social and economic power between men and women. Feminists have suggested that macro social changes can be achieved by way of changes in social policy and the law. Legal remedies can function both to deter future offending by offering certain and significant costs, and as a socialising agent by defining the limits of acceptable behaviour (Carbonatto, 1994); that is, by altering the world view or ideology of male domination. Feminists consider that success of preventative efforts,

which aim to transform patriarchal society, must ultimately be measured over the long term, as fundamental changes to whole systems inevitably take time (Pence & Shepard, 1988).

Adams (1989) outlines a profeminist treatment programme for abusive men that firstly focuses on getting men to make safety plans to minimize the possibility of continued violence. This stage also includes men confronting the many ways in which they attempt to deny or share responsibility for their violence, educating men on the harmful short and long-term consequences of their behaviour, and identifying and challenging the men's other non-physical control patterns. Once the abuser has demonstrated a willingness to abstain from violent and controlling behaviours, the feminist treatment programmes then aim to change men's devaluating attitudes towards female partners, as well as the expectations and feelings that accompany abusive behaviour.

Feminists consider that treatment effectiveness should be measured directly in terms of how effective it is in stopping men's abusive behaviour, and also in terms of its impact on the larger community. That is, in terms of how the treatment programmes actively support larger social change efforts to promote equal rights for women or actively promote changes to the patriarchal belief system in the wider society (Adams, 1989). In this sense feminist interventions make treatments and preventions inseparable. Feminists believe that a further goal of intervention in the problem of MAFP must be to change the treatment providers, as well as the domestically abusive men, for as a community, the ability to successfully intervene with an abuser is directly tied to understanding them as a manifestation of a part of all of us (Pence, 1989). On a practical level this feminist intervention requires, for example, that the organisations that work with domestic abuse offenders address their own internal power dynamics and hierarchical organisation.

4.2 EVALUATION OF FEMINIST PATRIARCHAL THEORIES

Explanatory Breadth

Feminist theories can simply and economically explain for eight of the important phenomena identified in Chapter Three. Feminist theories can explain the relative prevalence of MAFP (phenomenon 1). As patriarchy is said to be such a pervasive system it would be expected that a large number of men would abuse their female partners. Feminist theories can explain the fact that men rather than women are the main perpetrators of heterosexual partner abuse (phenomenon 4). This is because within patriarchal societies it is men, rather than women, who are instilled with belief in

their superiority, and their right to control their partner. Within a patriarchal society men are also effectively rewarded for dominating their female partners, rather than the reverse.

Feminist theories can account for the comparatively normal nature of MAFP (phenomenon 3). Within a patriarchal system, all members of society take on patriarchal values and beliefs via hegemony,²⁷ and most, therefore, come to accept male domination and MAFP, or consider it to be comparatively normal. Feminist theories could also simply account for domestically assaultive men's more positive attitudes to use of violence (phenomenon 6). Although feminist theories do suggest that attitudes cause behaviours, they argue that these attitudes are largely unconscious and unreportable, and they would therefore, not be expected to be easily identified empirically. Also feminist theory does not explicitly argue that domestic abusers have significantly different attitudes than non-abusers: it only attempts to explain men's behaviour as a group. Feminist theories could, however, simply explain this fact by utilizing the auxiliary assumption that violent men provide retrospective justifications for their particular behaviour.

Feminist theories could relatively easily explain why domestically abusive men predominantly abuse their female partners (phenomenon 9) for patriarchal ideology instills in men specific beliefs regarding the acceptability of controlling those women with whom they are in close or intimate relations. Feminist theories could also relatively easily explain the fact that alcohol is associated with MAFP (phenomenon 12), if the auxiliary assumption is accepted that within the patriarchal system an important belief justifying male behaviour is that when men drink alcohol, it causes them to be violent. Feminist theories can also account for the fact that physically assaultive men do not report more conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), or a more traditional masculine gender schema than non-assaultive men (phenomenon 8), because feminist theories suggest that these attitudes are largely unreportable and unconscious.

Feminist theories, however, cannot explain four of the important facts identified in Chapter Three. As they stand feminist theories are not able to explain lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5), even though this is a very similar phenomenon to MAFP, for the theories assume that women do not have the belief systems that underlie this behaviour. Feminist theories also cannot explain why some men do not abuse (phenomenon 2), for feminist theories are concerned with macro explanations. They attempt to explain why men in general use physical force against partners and de-

²⁷Hegemony relates to how the dominant consciousness is internalised by the broad masses and becomes common sense (Prilleltensky, 1994).

emphasize differences amongst men. Feminist theory would have more explanatory breadth if it could incorporate an explanation of why some men within a patriarchal society do not abuse. To remain true to feminist explanations, however, they would need to do this without obscuring the important political challenge of looking at how these men are similar to non-abusers and what non-abusers do that is similar to them (Lloyd-Pask & McMaster, 1991).

Feminist theories could begin to account for the fact that men tend to abuse their partners in private (phenomenon 10), if this were understood as an indicator of men's control over their behaviour (auxiliary assumption). To do this, however, it must be assumed that men do this because at some level they understand their behaviour to be socially unacceptable. This is contrary to feminist theory's postulation that patriarchy ideology upholds and endorses male control tactics. Finally, feminist theories cannot explain why those men who have themselves experienced or witnessed violence as children are more likely to abuse their female partners as adults (phenomenon 11).

In relation to analogy, the third criterion of explanatory coherence, feminist patriarchal theory is also utilized to explain non-partner rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, and femicide. It is argued that like in MAFP, in these other forms of violence against women, patriarchy provides the structural and ideological underpinnings (Smith, 1990).

Practical Utility

Feminist theories have initial practical utility because they identify the problem to be explained as being broader than just acts of physical violence. Another factor which contributes to their practical utility is the fact that they suggest modifiable causal factors, such as patriarchy, individual men's belief systems and social responses.

Feminist theories have further practical worth because they suggest prevention as well as treatment interventions for MAFP. It is noted, however, that at times feminist treatment interventions appear to be driven more by the need to provide immediate solutions and alternatives to non-feminist treatment approaches, than by feminist theory itself. For feminist theory primarily focuses on macro-causes and acknowledges patriarchy as a system so pervasive that a small number of treatment sessions would not be likely to successfully counter its influence. The feminist attention to treatment interventions is, however, understandable given that within a largely individualistic society, social based interventions are less likely to receive funding or be appraised as realistic alternatives.

Feminist theories have additional practical utility as they do not implicate or blame women for their own abuse or suggest innate male/female differences, consequences which would operate in the greater context and longer-term to further oppress women as a group.

Conceptual Coherence

There is a critical contradiction inherent in feminist theory that is also evident in feminist driven interventions. This is that patriarchy is viewed as a key constraint on men's belief systems and consequent behaviour, one that impacts on men's behaviour apart from the men's subjective awareness of it. Yet simultaneously, individual men are held responsible for their choices to utilize patriarchal ideology and their consequent abusive behaviours. If men's choices are in fact constrained by patriarchy, then men cannot be simultaneously exhibiting true free choice. It is not that these two positions are ultimately contradictory but that these *determinist* and *free-choice* positions are both presented within feminist theories without the provision of any theoretical details outlining the relationship between the two.

CHAPTER FIVE

BIOLOGICAL THEORIES

There has been very little theoretical or empirical research on biological causes of MAFP. Gelles and Straus (1979), in their early theoretical integration of family violence theories, did not consider biological causes and, similarly, more recent publications that have provided overviews of the field have also frequently failed to include this topic (e.g. Gelles & Loseke, 1993). Any attempt at theoretical integration must, however, initially consider all explanations of MAFP, and fully justify why any theoretical perspectives should not be further developed.

This chapter will divide biological explanations of MAFP into two sections. The first will consider the alcohol explanation and the second will consider the other brain damage/dysfunction explanations. The alcohol explanation will be considered separately because of the immense influence of this perspective. The notion that drunkenness is responsible for family violence is widely considered commonsense by the general public and even by researchers in the field of domestic violence (Norris, 1987).²⁸

5.1 THE ALCOHOL EXPLANATION

There are a number of different types of explanations in the literature that focus on the relationship between alcohol and MAFP. These explanations most commonly relate to: alcohol as a direct cause of MAFP (as a disinhibitor of pent-up underlying anger and/or an impairer of judgement) (Flanzer, 1993), alcohol as an indirect cause of MAFP resulting from the cultural expectancy effect of alcohol (Gelles, 1993), alcohol as a rationalisation for violence (MacAndrew & Edgerton, 1969), and alcohol use as a consequence of male partner violence (Kantor & Straus, 1987). This study will focus on a variation of the direct cause theory. This particular theory takes into account the fact that many men have consumed alcohol all their lives, but have never been abusive towards their female partners (Taylor & Leonard, 1983). It suggests that the aggression

²⁸Although other forms of substance abuse may be related to MAFP, alcohol abuse remains the most frequent form of substance abuse connected to family violence in the literature, probably due to the high base rate of alcohol use in the population, rather than to the more pronounced anger-inducing effects of ethanol (Miller & Potter-Efron, 1990). It will be the only substance abuse considered in this study.

enhancing effects of alcohol are a result of a combination of the physiological effects of the substance itself, the underlying personality of the user, and the social setting (Miller & Potter-Efron, 1990). This theory is not at all well developed within the MAFP field. It is, however, relatively more well developed within the sex offending literature (Herman, 1990; Marshall, Laws, & Barbaree, 1990). This means that this particular variation of the alcohol theory of MAFP has initial advantage over the other alcohol theories in the MAFP field, as it has greater explanatory coherence, in terms of analogy with other explanations.

5.1.1 EXPLICATION OF THE ALCOHOL EXPLANATION

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

The problem behaviour identified in this literature is all forms of what is referred to as *family violence*.

The Explanation

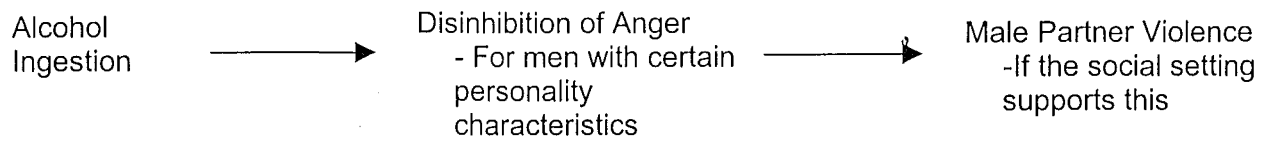
- Alcohol effects are the result of a combination of the physiological effects of alcohol, the underlying personality of the user, and the social setting (Miller & Potter-Efron, 1990). That is, alcohol interacts pharmacologically with certain personality characteristics to cause male violence towards female partners, if the social setting promotes the use of violence in these situations.

- For men with certain personality characteristics, alcohol intoxication acts as a disinhibitor of pent-up underlying anger (Flanzer, 1993).

- In physiological terms, ethyl alcohol works by depressing the higher centres of the brain, which control inhibitory functions learned for civilized behaviours. Alcohol therefore leads to deviant behaviour "not by stepping on the gas but rather by paralysing the brakes" (Critchlow, 1986, p. 753).

- The social setting can modify or even overwhelm the pharmacological effects of the alcohol (Miller & Potter-Efron, 1990). For example, if the social setting disfavours aggression this will moderate the physiological effect of alcohol.

Figure 2: The Alcohol Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The alcohol explanation appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- (a) Male partner violence is an individual problem.
- (b) Ethyl alcohol acts pharmacologically on the brain to inhibit control of anger.
- (c) Ethyl alcohol act differently on different human brains. Domestic violence offenders differ from other men in terms of their personality characteristics.
- (d) When men with these certain personality characteristics have been drinking, they are not in control of their violent behaviour.
- (e) Male partner violence as a result of alcohol use does not involve intention or choice.
- (f) Male partner violence as a result of alcohol use is expressive rather than instrumental.
- (g) Male partner violence is a result of a combination of state and trait mechanisms. The pharmacological effects of alcohol is a state or transitory cause of MAFP whereas the personality characteristics that are susceptible to the effects of alcohol are more of a trait or permanent mechanism.

The Type of Explanation

This alcohol explanation is a proximal, situational theory that elucidates the triggering processes or the *how* and *when* of male partner violence. The proximal cause is the alcohol consumption and resulting brain dysfunction, the distal cause is the personality characteristic that results in these men's susceptibility to the effects of alcohol.

This is a realist theory, as its explanation refers to unobserved, underlying mechanisms and it will therefore be evaluated alongside other realist theories of MAFP. As was noted earlier, this alcohol theory is not well developed within the MAFP literature.

Applications

Although proponents of this theory do not make any direct suggestions regarding interventions, this theory would obviously suggest that the treatment of male violence towards female partners relies on reducing or eliminating alcohol use and that prevention relies on eliminating the personality characteristics vulnerable to the effects of alcohol.

5.1.2 EVALUATION OF ALCOHOL EXPLANATION

Explanatory Breadth

The alcohol explanation can explain four of the important phenomena identified in the area. Clearly, the alcohol explanation can directly explain the correlation between alcohol use and male partner violence (phenomenon 12) in terms of a direct causal relationship. The alcohol explanation can also explain men who are not domestically abusive in terms of men who do not possess these personality characteristics or who do, but do not drink alcohol (phenomenon 2).

The alcohol explanation can also incorporate the facts that abusive men are not more likely than non-abusive men to report conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), and that these men do not report more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), because this explanation does not propose that these factors are related to male partner violence.

The alcohol explanation as it stands, however, cannot explain eight of the important phenomena in the field. This theory cannot fully explain the widespread nature of the problem of male partner violence (phenomenon 1). Although it could possibly partly explain this phenomenon in terms of the prevalence of alcohol consumption in most contemporary societies, its explanation involves the interaction of alcohol with personality characteristics, and the theory does not directly suggest why these particular personality characteristics would be prevalent. The theory also cannot explain why MAFP is socially accepted and socially normative (phenomenon 3).

The alcohol explanation cannot explain why domestic abuse offenders report more positive attitudes towards partner violence (phenomenon 6), for it does not consider attitudes to violence in its theoretical writings. This alcohol theory cannot easily explain why domestic abuse offenders exhibit control in terms of who they abuse and where they abuse (phenomena 11 & 12), for the theory says nothing about exactly what the social setting promotes, generally or specifically. This theory cannot explain

the absence of a phenomenon of husband battering (phenomenon 4), or the phenomenon of lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5), for the theory is not developed in relation to gender or group differences.

The alcohol explanation cannot simply explain the generational repetition of abuse (phenomenon 11). It could possibly explain this phenomenon in terms of the genetic transmission of these personality types and the predispositional tendency to use/abuse alcohol, if the auxiliary assumption is accepted that witnessing or experiencing abuse is in fact just a measure of the existence of the phenomenon of parental abuse. However, the theoretical writings do not touch on this possibility at all.

Practical Utility

This theory has initial practical utility because it suggests modifiable causal factors. However, it primarily focuses on treatment interventions rather than preventative interventions. This theory also promotes conservative messages regarding loss of control. Theories that promote notions of *loss of control* are inherently conservative, because even if it were true that men lost control at the moment of aggression, focusing on this aspect deflects from the fact that any loss of control would be only momentary or temporary. Following the overt aggressive act men generally make no effort to ensure that they are not aggressive in the future.

Conceptual Coherence

As was noted previously, this theory is not well developed within the MAFP literature. In particular, this theory suffers because it only provides minimal details regarding the particular personality characteristics that are said to interact with alcohol consumption to produce violence.

It is noted that an alternative alcohol explanation for these phenomena, that would have at least as much explanatory breadth as this explanation, would be that certain personality characteristics are more likely to be affected by cultural expectancies regarding the effects of alcohol, or are more likely to utilize the justifications offered by the alcohol-violence ideology.

5.2 BRAIN DAMAGE/DYSFUNCTION EXPLANATION

The following explication and evaluation of the brain damage/dysfunction explanation of MAFP will primarily focus on the work of Elliot (1988) and Johnson

(1996). Elliot (1988) is one of the few published researchers in the area of biology and MAFP. Although Johnson (1996) considers biology in relation to general violence, she includes family violence as a subset of this problem. In addition, the recent work of Perry, Pollard, Blakley, Baker, and Vigilante (1995) will be included here. Although this work is not directly associated with the MAFP literature, it will be included because it complements and extends the approaches of Elliot (1988) and Johnson (1996).

5.2.1 EXPLICATION OF BRAIN DAMAGE OR DYSFUNCTION EXPLANATION

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

The problem behaviour or phenomenon that is identified by biological theories is usually severe physical aggression. Biological theories of male partner violence have developed directly out of biological theories of general violence, as it is assumed that these phenomena are very similar. Empirical and theoretical research from this body of research is routinely applied to the area of MAFP. As general biological theories have been traditionally concerned with male to male violence, these biological theories of MAFP primarily consider male perpetrated partner abuse.

The Explanation

- Biological explanations suggest that every human brain contains the neurological and chemical capacity for violent and destructive behaviour. Most people, however, learn to control it (Elliot, 1988).

- Damage or dysfunction of the brain can impair people's ability to control violent behaviour. This damage or dysfunction can also impair cognition, perception, emotions, and the physiological inhibitory systems that control aggression (Elliot, 1988).

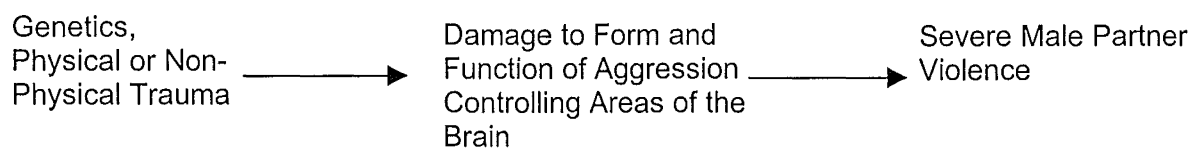
- Brain damage or dysfunction can be in the form of anatomical brain abnormalities, infections and other medical illnesses, cognitive deficits, or abnormal brain processes such as abnormal glucose metabolism, suppression or overactivity of neurotransmitters, and abnormal endocrine processes (Johnson, 1996).

- The brain organizes in a use-dependent fashion. Early traumatic events can, therefore, cause changes in the structure and function of the brain that contribute to violent behaviour (Johnson, 1996; Perry et al., 1995).

•Men are more prone to being violent than women because of the exposure of the male foetal brain to testosterone. This influences the differential development of circuits that later mediate aggressive responses (Elliot, 1988; Johnson, 1996).

•Brain damage or dysfunction can be a result of, (i) genetic make-up (ii) physical environmental factors such as head injury or medical illness, and (iii) non-physical environmental factors such as non-physical abuse and trauma.

Figure 3: The Brain Damage/Dysfunction Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The brain dysfunction/damage explanation appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- (a) Male partner violence is a problem with an important biological, individual component.
- (b) The dynamics involved in general violence - that is males towards males - is similar to that involved in male partner violence.
- (c) All humans are born with the capacity or capability for violence. This must, therefore, be the result of evolutionary processes.
- (d) Males start with, or are born with, a greater capacity for violence than females.
- (e) Male partner violence is abnormal behaviour resulting from abnormal brain form or function.
- (f) Most people learn to control their capacity for violence.
- (g) Brain damage or dysfunction reduces control of this capacity for violence, as do social forces.
- (h) Male partner violence can be the result of a brain trait (permanent head injury, childhood psychological trauma) or a brain state (temporary brain infection).
- (i) Male partner violence does not involve choice or intention.
- (j) Male partner violence is expressive behaviour rather than instrumental behaviour.

The Type of Explanation

This explanation provides a proximal explanation, which is the damage or dysfunction of the brain mechanisms that control aggression, and a distal explanation which includes: genetic inheritance of brain dysfunction, sex differentiation of the brain, or environmentally caused brain damage or dysfunction by (i) physical trauma (e.g., medical illness or physical injury from time of conception), or (ii) psychological trauma such as abuse or neglect.

Biological explanations of violence are rarely presented as single factor theories. Their proponents stress that violence is not the result of a single cause, but is biopsychosocial in origin and they, therefore, usually present their view as one factor that needs to be incorporated into a multifactorial theory.

This explanation is realist in nature as it postulates unobserved, underlying loss of control of anger as the cause of male partner violence. It will, therefore, be evaluated alongside other realist theories. It is noted, however, that these theories are often presented as instrumentalist *explanations* that appeal to empirical regularities between violent offences and various states of brain damage or dysfunction.

Applications

There is little in this literature regarding treatments. Pharmacological treatments are suggested to remedy some biological dysfunctions, and where drugs are not effective, psychosurgery is suggested as a possibility (Elliot, 1988). Obviously, if childhood trauma is considered to be a distal cause of MAFP, then eradicating childhood trauma would be a major preventative effort suggested by biological theories.

5.2.2 EVALUATION OF BRAIN DAMAGE OR DYSFUNCTION EXPLANATION

Explanatory Breadth²⁹

Biological theories can explain seven of the important phenomena identified in Chapter Three. They can explain men who do not abuse (phenomenon 2) in terms of the absence of brain damage/dysfunction. Both the prevalence of male partner violence (phenomenon 1) and the absence of the phenomenon of husband battering (phenomenon 4) could be explained in terms of the theories' postulate that women are

²⁹Generally in this study, each explication and appraisal focuses on one particular theory. This section on biological theories, however, simultaneously explicates and appraises a diverse group of theories broadly defined as *biological*. It needs to be noted that it is partly for this reason, that this group of theories fare so well in terms of their explanatory breadth; for what one theory cannot explain, another theory can explain.

born with a lesser capacity for violence than men. Biological theories could explain the generational repetition of violence (phenomenon 11) in terms of the damage to brain structure resulting from childhood abuse and trauma, and/or in terms of genetically inherited differences in the brain's structure and (dys)function.

Biological theories could account for the fact that men who are violent towards their female partners do not report more conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), or have more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8) than non-violent men, for within these explanations male partner violence is not considered to be a problem causally related to attitudes or gender schema. These theories can clearly explain the alcohol/male partner violence correlation (phenomenon 12), for alcohol is conceived as one distal cause of brain damage or dysfunction.

There are five phenomena identified in Chapter Three which biological theories cannot easily explain. Biological theories are unable to easily explain the comparatively socially normative nature of male partner violence (phenomenon 3), for they do not consider social norms in their explanation. The theories cannot explain the fact that men who are violent towards their female partners report more positive attitudes towards the use of violence (phenomenon 6), as they do not theoretically consider attitudes.

Biological theories cannot explain the existence of lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5), unless they were to assume that lesbians have brain circuits relating to aggression that are more similar to those of heterosexual men, than heterosexual women. However, this would be a very controversial auxiliary assumption. Biological theories are also unable to explain the fact that men who abuse their female partners exhibit control over their behaviour (phenomena 11 and 12), which would be an important phenomenon for these theories to explain, as these explanations are generally based upon the assumption of loss of control.

Practical Utility

The biological theories considered in this section are a very broad group of theories. Some biological theories suggest origins of male partner violence that are ineradicable or non-modifiable, such as genetic factors, and these theories are, therefore, of only limited practical value. Others are suggestive of only treatment interventions, such as drug treatment or psychosurgery. These theories, therefore, have a greater potential practical utility, although the question remains as to how successful drug treatment is for men's partner violence when virtually no research has been done in this area (Elliot, 1988).

Biological theories, which suggest childhood trauma as the distal cause of MAFP, are suggestive of preventative efforts. These, therefore, have considerable practical utility. Most other biological theories, however, are inherently conservative as they portray innate male/female differences in the propensity for aggression.

Conceptual Coherence

As with the alcohol explanation, it may be that an alternative explanatory theory can be successfully generated from these same phenomena. This alternative theory could, for example, suggest that a man who has a recognized brain damage or dysfunction in our culture may or may not experience greater anger or arousal. However, because of prevalence of the *loss of control* ideology, he is less likely to attempt to control his behaviour.

CHAPTER SIX

PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

Psychological theories suggest that MAFP is a problem primarily related to individual, internal deficits or pathology. Although modern psychological theories tend to acknowledge explanatory constructs outside of the psychological domain, their main focus remains on causal factors such as personality traits, learning histories, psychological disorders, and/or cognitive processes. This is the oldest framework and arguably the common-sense perspective of everyday life in modern day western society (Gelles & Loseke, 1993).

This chapter will be divided into seven sections, each considering a different psychological theory of MAFP. The psychological theories that appear in the literature and that will be considered in this study are: evolutionary psychology, borderline personality organisation theory, social learning theory, attribution theory, cognitive-behavioural theory, the theory of emotional aggression, and the ecological perspective.

6.1 EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

Evolutionary Psychology is a relatively new and influential theoretical approach within psychology. Evolutionary psychology incorporates Darwin's evolutionary theory to suggest that to explain current behaviours, it is essential to understand the natural selective processes in our ancestral environments that contributed to the psychological mechanisms that underlie these behaviours. Evolutionary psychology explicitly distances itself from sociobiology, another evolutionary theory which was prominent in the 1970s. Broadly, sociobiology suggests that all existing *behaviours*, rather than the psychological mechanisms that underlie them, are adaptive.

6.1.1 EXPLICATION OF EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

As with feminist theories, evolutionary psychology identifies the central problem to be explained in the field as men's domination of their female sexual partners, rather than the individual acts they may use to achieve this.

The Explanation

- Evolutionary psychology suggests that psychological mechanisms, like physical morphology, are formed via natural selection, a continuous process of differential reproductive success by which certain design differences are transmitted to subsequent generations.

- These psychological mechanisms mediate between environmental stimuli and human behaviour.

- Basic human psychological mechanisms are large in number, domain specific, and generally similar in all humans. However, different male and female psychological mechanisms will result where men and women have faced substantially different problems over evolutionary history, such as those to do with reproduction (Malamuth, Heavey, & Linz, 1993).

- Psychological mechanisms include desires, preferences, motivations, beliefs, information processing devices, and emotions (Malamuth et al., 1993).

- Male violence towards women intimates is a result of male psychological mechanisms of sexual jealousy and proprietariness, which can be understood as the desire to have control or power over others (Daly & Wilson, 1988).

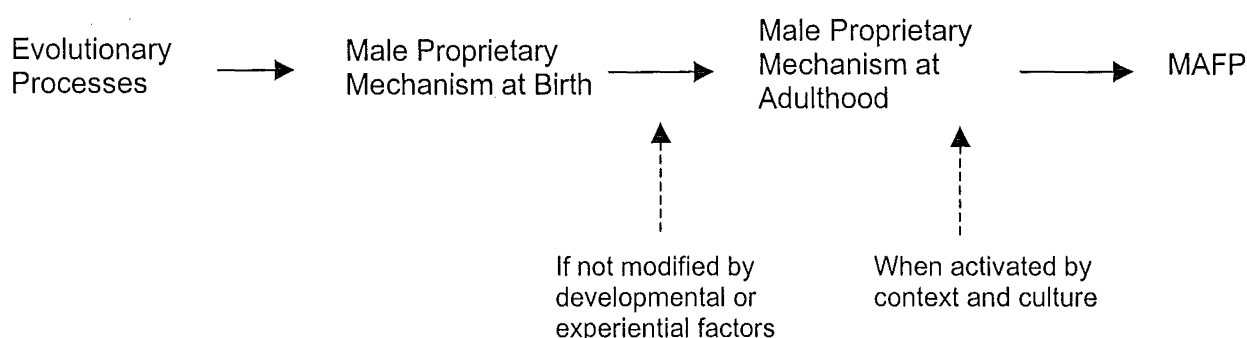
- Male sexual jealousy and proprietariness have evolved in males because they had reproductive advantage in ancestral environments by preventing cuckoldry. This refers to the situation where a male will invest energy raising a child that he believes was conceived by him, when it was not. Natural selection, therefore, operated on those male psychological characteristics that served to increase the likelihood that the men were investing in their own offspring. This resulted in the universal evolution within the male mind of a psychology with greater feelings of proprietariness, in response to real or perceived sexual threat. This component of the evolutionary psychology explanation is called *the theory of parental certainty*.

- As a result of this process of natural selection, men have the psychological capacity or the innate potential to oppress (Malamuth, 1996; Pratto, 1996).

- Spousal violence is considered to be a coercive tactic of proprietary men (Daly & Wilson, 1988).

• Individual variability amongst men is explained by evolutionary psychology in terms of three factors: (i) inherited differences, and developmental and experiential histories, which modify the psychological mechanisms that men are born with; (ii) the social and cultural conditions which activate psychological mechanisms of adult males (Malamuth, 1996);³⁰ and (iii) the choices that individual adult men make (Pratto, 1996). Therefore, the extent to which men will try and accomplish domination, and the methods they will use, will differ depending on these three factors.

Figure 4: The Evolutionary Psychology Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The evolutionary psychology explanation appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- (a) Males and females are born with different psychological mechanisms in relation to sexual relationships.
- (b) MAFP is caused by the psychological make-up of individual men.
- (c) MAFP results from normal male psychological mechanisms.
- (d) Men have a genetic predisposition to feel rage to a perceived sexual threat.
- (e) Male domination is not learned behaviour.
- (f) Male proprietariness is a trait or permanent psychological mechanism.
- (g) Male dominatory tactics are learned behaviour.
- (h) MAFP is instrumental behaviour.

The Type of Explanation

Evolutionary psychology in effect proposes two broad levels of explanation. The evolution of psychological mechanisms by natural selection, which is the ultimate or

³⁰Evolutionary psychology acknowledges that the dominant social system is patriarchal and argues that this social system originated from the male psychological mechanism of proprietariness (Buss, 1996; Malamuth, 1996).

distal explanation, and psychological mechanisms which mediate the links between environmental pressures and the behavioural output of humans; this is the proximal explanation. Although evolutionarily acquired male feelings of proprietariness is the critical element of the theory, evolutionary psychology presents a multifactorial theory that also incorporates various other proximal causal factors, such as social, cultural and individual developmental factors, to enable behaviour and individual differences to be explained.

General evolutionary psychology, of which the explanation of MAFP is part, is an example of a comparatively broad and deep, well developed theoretical research programme. The proximal and ultimate explanations that evolutionary psychology provides are realist in that they appeal to postulated underlying explanatory entities. Evolutionary psychology will, therefore, be further evaluated against other theories of MAFP.

Applications

Buss (1996) is the only evolutionary psychologist to suggest specific interventions for MAFP. He proposes various interventions based on decreasing the conflict between the sexes, conflict which evolutionary psychology suggests is inevitable given the differing reproductive strategies that have evolved in men and women. These interventions involve creating relationships that minimize jealousy or male proprietariness in a way similar to the creation of environments that reduce the development of calluses by minimising friction (Buss, 1994). The specific interventions for MAFP that Buss (1996) suggests are:

- (i) educating men about sex differences, so as to reduce conflict between the sexes, for example, educating men how upsetting violence or aggression actually is to women;
- (ii) educating men about the sort of contexts that can trigger conflict between the sexes, for example, educating men not to over-interpret the sexual intentions of their partner when she smiles at another man; and
- (iii) getting men and women to fulfil each other's evolved desires and thereby increasing harmony between them.

6.1.2 EVALUATION OF EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

Explanatory Breadth

Evolutionary psychology can economically explain eight of the important phenomena in the field of MAFP. It can explain why MAFP is comparatively prevalent

(phenomenon 1) and socially accepted (phenomenon 3). Evolutionary psychology would suggest that MAFP is likely to be prevalent if all males possess the proprietary mechanism. It would expect that MAFP would be relatively socially accepted because of the patriarchal system of norms, which itself is said to have originated from the male proprietary mechanism. Evolutionary psychology can explain why not all men abuse (phenomenon 2). Although all men are born with the proprietary mechanism, developmental, experiential and social factors modify and differentially activate this mechanism, so that not all men abuse their partners. Men are also said to make choices about how they behave.

Evolutionary psychology can explain why men generally direct their abuse exclusively towards their female partners (phenomenon 9). This is because the proprietary mechanism is said to be activated only in relation to sexual relations, not in relation to non-sexual relations. Evolutionary psychology can also explain why women perpetrated abuse of male partners does not occur to any extent (phenomenon 4). This is because women do not possess the proprietary mechanisms that underlie this form of partner abuse. Also this behaviour would not be encouraged by the patriarchal system.

Evolutionary psychology is able to explain the generational repetition of abuse (phenomenon 11), because it suggests that inherited differences, and developmental and experiential histories, modify the psychological mechanisms that men are born with, and that social factors activate these proprietary mechanisms. A simple auxiliary assumption would be that these factors run in families.

Evolutionary psychology can account for the fact that men who are physically assaultive do not report more conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), or report more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), because evolutionary psychology does not postulate that these factors are causally related to MAFP.

Evolutionary psychology cannot explain four of the important facts in the MAFP domain. Evolutionary psychology is clearly unable to explain lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5), when it is understood as a similar phenomenon to MAFP. For if women do not possess the proprietary mechanism that underlies MAFP, they would not be able to perpetrate this form of partner abuse, unless of course lesbians are considered to be psychologically more similar to heterosexual men than heterosexual women. This would, however, be a very controversial auxiliary assumption.

Evolutionary psychology cannot explain why men are domestically violent towards their female partners in private (phenomenon 10). Evolutionary psychology cannot immediately or simply explain the fact that men who are violent towards their female partners report more positive attitudes towards violence (phenomenon 6). Proprietariness is postulated as a desire to have control which has not been theoretically related to (reported) attitudes. Evolutionary psychology cannot simply explain the correlation between alcohol and male partner violence (phenomenon 12), for it does not consider alcohol theoretically.

The second criterion of explanatory coherence is simplicity. A major assumption of the specific evolutionary psychological theory of MAFP is that male control of female partners increased male genetic fitness in the social ancestral environment of the Pleistocene period. All attempts, however, to reconstruct human social evolution or the ancestral environment are, of course, speculative (Smuts, 1996) and likely to be heavily influenced by projection from the present day (Herlihy, 1986). Furthermore, as Griffiths (1997) suggests, problems and solutions in ancestral environments are likely to have been many to many, and not one to one, and there would, therefore, be many solutions to ensure that men are expending energy raising only genetic children. Reliance on this major and controversial special assumption decreases the simplicity of this explanation.

In terms of analogy, the third criterion of explanatory coherence, it is noted that evolutionary psychology's ultimate explanation is similar to the accepted evolutionary explanation for physical morphology. The specific evolutionary psychological explanation for MAFP is also similar to the evolutionary psychology explanations for: (i) violence towards step-children and other non-blood relations (Daly & Wilson, 1988); (ii) men's violence towards other men (Pratto, 1996); and (iii) men's sexual violence towards women in general (Malamuth, 1996; Shields & Shields, 1983). All these behaviours are considered to have functioned to increased genetic representation. However, it is noted that evolutionary psychology theory cannot explain abuse perpetrated towards blood relatives, like elder abuse and child abuse frequently is.

Practical Utility

Evolutionary psychological attempts to explain male domination of female partners, rather than individual acts of violence and, therefore, has initial practical utility. It has nothing, however, to offer in terms of prevention. Also, most of the treatments that it suggests, such as educating men about the effects of their behaviour and their cognitive distortions, would also be suggested by other theoretical frameworks.

The treatments that Buss (1996) suggests are also problematic. His third suggestion for treatment, that harmony between the sexes can be increased by men and women fulfilling each other's evolved desires, is clearly incompatible with the evolutionary psychological claim that men's and women's evolved desires are in fact contradictory. Buss (1996) never expands on exactly how women and men could in reality fulfil each other's evolved desires. It is noted, however, that as many abusive men become jealous or proprietary over imagined rather than actual infidelities, women's attempts to fulfil men's desire to be in control will in reality be unlikely to succeed. Also, expecting women to actively participate in their own domination is a high cost for the avoidance of violence, even if it did work (Ferraro, 1988).³¹

Proponents of evolutionary psychology consider that it is a science that is purely descriptive and, therefore, has no social or political agenda (Buss, 1995a. 1996). The line separating descriptive from normative discourse is, however, far from clear and evolutionary psychology has various identifiable social and political implications. Evolution is widely perceived as showing us what is desirable (Oyama, 1991), inevitable and/or natural. In reality, an evolutionary psychology conceptualisation of MAFP and innate male/female differences, would be most likely to support the status quo, which is the system of patriarchy. Although advocates of evolutionary psychology deny that their theory ignores social responsibility, the emphasis on evolutionarily derived male proprietariness minimizes social responsibility.

Conceptual Coherence

Evolutionary psychology's strength is that it provides a theory that is centred on evolutionary principles, rather than a set of unrelated explanatory principles without a coherent core explanation, for all aspects of its explanation rely on the principles of evolution. However, evolutionary psychology is limited by a number of other conceptual problems.

Evolutionary psychology assumes that the psychological mechanism of proprietariness was designed to serve the function of ensuring men were investing only in children conceived by them (Buss, 1994). It is feasible, however, that even if relevant psychological mechanisms can be found to exist, that they are the result of exaptation, rather than adaptation (Gould, 1991). Exaptation occurs when a mechanism has either

³¹If women are to fulfil men's other desires that have evolved around sexual reproduction, they may also be expected to fulfil men's evolved desire to monopolise status (Pratto, 1996), and to have physically attractive and multiple, sexual partners. Men in return may be required to fulfil women's evolved desires to be with a mate who has accrued resources (Buss, 1996). It is clear that if men and women are to fulfil each others evolved desires, the current system of male domination and female subordination will be preserved rather than weakened.

been previously shaped by natural selection for another function, or exists independently of the action of natural selection, and is then co-opted because of its present utility (Gould, 1991).^{32 33} If this were the case, the emphasis in evolutionary psychology would have to move to current utility rather than historic origin, and the basis for evolutionary psychology's ultimate explanation would be effectively challenged (Gould, 1991). It could be argued on this basis that aspects of the evolutionary psychological theory, related to adaptive evolutionary processes, are redundant for explanations of MAFP, for the theory could equally explain the phenomena above, without reference to evolutionary adaptation.

Evolutionary psychology suggests that adult male psychological mechanisms of proprietariness are always present in males, although they may be modified from birth by developmental and experiential factors, and that these mechanisms are activated or deactivated by social or cultural context and socialisation. If this is the case, males must possess other non-proprietary psychological mechanisms that can be activated in relation to sexual reproduction or by the threat of sexual infidelity. Evolutionary psychology needs, therefore, to consider and explain the existence of these alternative psychological mechanisms.

6.2 BORDERLINE PERSONALITY ORGANISATION

It is frequently suggested in the literature that domestic abuse offenders have a certain psychopathology that plays an important role in their abusive behaviour (Hamberger & Hastings, 1988; O'Leary, 1993; Vaselle-Augenstein & Ehrlich, 1992). More specifically this psychopathology is said to involve psychological, or personality, characteristics, styles, traits, or disorders such as: dependence, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, dissociation from feelings, poor impulse control, intimacy and bonding problems, jealousy and possessiveness, borderline personality organisation, mental disorders such as Personality Disorders or Intermittent Explosive Disorder as classified in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), and/or significantly elevated scores on the aggressive/sadistic and antisocial personality scales of the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI) (Dutton, 1995; O'Leary, 1993; Vaselle-Augenstein & Ehrlich, 1992).

³²For example, a hand did not evolve to hold a pen, but it is now widely used for this task.

³³To ascertain if mechanisms have evolved via natural selection or not, primate data in the form of cladograms can be utilised (Griffiths, 1997). To date, however, evolutionary psychology has not utilised research of this type.

In the MAFP literature, the theories that relate MAFP to psychopathology are almost exclusively instrumentalist in nature; that is, they offer an *explanation* that appeals to an empirical regularity, namely the association between MAFP and various measurable psychological or personality categories, without mention of any underlying causal mechanisms. Although the explanations put forward by the DSM and the MCMI are not atheoretical,³⁴ within the MAFP literature they are generally treated as such. The borderline personality organisation theory of intimate abusiveness, put forward by Dutton (1995), however, is one personality theory that provides a realist explanation of MAFP, and it is this theory that will be considered in the remainder of this section.

6.2.1 EXPLICATION OF THE BORDERLINE PERSONALITY ORGANISATION THEORY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

This theory attempts to explain men who are verbally or physically violent, specifically in intimate relationships, as well as individual differences in men's tendency to be assaultive in these relationships. It also attempts to explain the cycle of violence,³⁵ and the self-generated nature of abuse, assuming these to be established phenomena.

The Explanation

- Intimate abuse is triggered by men's cyclical, internal mood states, rather than by external events.

- The basis of these internal mood states is the borderline personality organisation. The borderline personality organisation is a less severe form of the more rare borderline personality disorder.

- The borderline personality organisation involves: (a) a proclivity for intense, unstable interpersonal relationships characterized by intermittent undermining of the significant other, manipulation, and masked dependency; (b) an unstable sense of self

³⁴The DSM presents itself as atheoretical because it does not attempt to identify the original or ultimate cause of mental disorder. However, as it identifies mental disorder or internal dysfunction as the proximal cause of the symptoms inclusive of MAFP, rather than say explanations related to intention or avoidance of responsibility, it cannot accurately be portrayed as atheoretical (Wakefield, 1992, 1997). The MCMI is directly derived from Millon's (1981) biopsychosocial theory of personality and psychopathology.

³⁵The *cycle of violence* does not refer to the intergenerational transmission of violence, but the cycle which domestic abuse offender's behaviour is proposed to go through (Walker, 1979), i.e., a tension-building phase, a battering phase, and then a regret and respite phase. The *cycle of violence* is best understood as a postulated clinical phenomenon, although it is noted that it is presented as a *theory* by Walker (1979).

with intolerance of being alone and abandonment anxiety; and (c) intense anger, demanding behaviour, and impulsivity, usually tied to substance abuse or promiscuity (Gunderson, 1984).

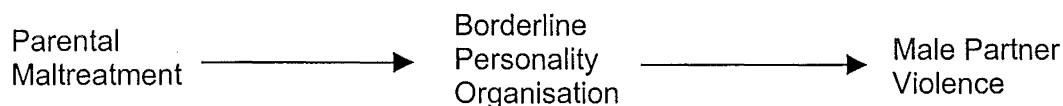
- Borderline personality organisation is a personality representation of a fearful attachment style. The borderline personality originates from parental mistreatment which involves frustrated/insecure attachments in family of origin, abuse or rejection by parents and/or parental shaming.

- Elements of borderline personality organisation seek out aspects of the culture to direct and justify abuse. When the ambient culture promotes the view that women are the nurturers or carers of men, this provides a justification or rationale for the expectation of men with borderline personality organisation that their partner should make his disphoria better.

- Intimate abuse is maintained by the tendency of men with borderline personality organisation to attribute blame to their partner.

- The characteristics of borderline personality organisation result in the increase in the likelihood of intimate aggressiveness.

Figure 5: The Borderline Personality Organisation Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The borderline personality organisation theory appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- Intimate abusiveness has psychological and family origins.
- Social values do not directly create borderline personality organisation, they merely indirectly justify and sustain it.
- The phenomenon called the cycle of violence (tension building, battering, regret and respite) exists.
- The phenomenon of self-generation of abuse exists.
- Borderline personality organisation is a trait, or a semi-permanent psychological mechanism.

- (f) Male choice is not involved in MAFP.
- (g) Domestic abuse offenders are different psychologically than other men.
- (h) Domestic abuse offenders may be the same psychologically as some women, for example, those women who abuse their children.

The Type of Explanation

This is a realist theory, as it posits the borderline personality organisation as the underlying, unobserved cause of MAFP and it will, therefore, be included for future theory evaluation. The theory suggests that the distal cause of MAFP is mistreatment in the family of origin and the proximal cause is the characteristics of the borderline personality organisation. This is a psychological theory that attempts to incorporate wider family and cultural variables.

Applications

This theory suggests treatment focusing on the borderline personality organisation, which may include therapy focusing on attachment issues or shame (Dutton, 1995). In terms of prevention, this theory would clearly suggest addressing parental mistreatment to eradicate male partner violence in the long term.

6.2.2 EVALUATION OF THE BORDERLINE PERSONALITY ORGANISATION THEORY

Explanatory Breadth

The borderline personality organisation theory can explain six of the important phenomena in the MAFP domain. This theory can explain why not all men are abusive (phenomenon 2). This is because not all men have experienced parental mistreatment in their family of origin. The borderline personality organisation theory can also explain why men predominantly abuse their female partners (phenomenon 9). This is because the patriarchal type culture that these men seek out dictates that women partners are responsible for making men's negative mood state associated with borderline personality organisation, so, therefore, women are likely to be the targets of abusive behaviours.

This theory can directly account for the fact that family violence tends to run in families (phenomenon 11), for abuse in one generation would operate as the distal cause in the subsequent generation, especially if witnessing MAFP was accepted as equivalent to experiencing mistreatment. This theory can also explain why domestically

violent men do not report more conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), or more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), because the theory does not refer to general attitudes to women or gender schema in its explanation. Finally, the borderline personality explanation can directly explain the fact that men who abuse their partners report more positive attitudes towards violence (phenomenon 6). These attitudes are considered to be rationalisations of these men's anger and behaviour towards their partners.

The borderline personality organisation theory is, however, unable to explain six of the important phenomena in the domain of MAFP. This theory cannot explain the socially accepted and normative nature of male partner abuse (phenomenon 3). Although the theory refers to socialising cultures that promote cultural values regarding acts, the theory does not refer to the nature of these socializing cultures in a way that could explain the generally socially normative nature of MAFP.³⁶ Similarly the borderline personality theory cannot explain the comparative prevalence of MAFP (phenomenon 1), the absence of a phenomenon of husband battering (phenomenon 4), or lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5). The borderline personality theory would seem to imply that women could also acquire borderline personality organisation as a result of parental mistreatment. It could, therefore, be possibly argued that no cultures exist that promote women's abuse of their female partners, but as the theory provides no theoretical details regarding the nature of the socializing cultures which could explain these differences in abusive behaviour between groups, this cannot be assumed.

This theory cannot explain why men abuse their partners in private (phenomenon 10), for the borderline personality organisation does not prescribe this. This theory provides no theoretical details to explain the correlation between alcohol and male partner violence (phenomenon 12).

Practical Utility

This theory has initial practical utility because it is suggestive of both treatment and preventative approaches. However, it potentially has conservative political implications as even the interventions derived from its distal cause of parental mistreatment require no change from the greater social system.

³⁶It is noted that Dutton (1995) does not refer to the patriarchal culture itself, but refers to a *socialising culture* that men with borderline personality organisation seek out, which clearly has the attributes of the patriarchal cultural system. Dutton (1995), however, implies that other important socialising cultures exist alongside this patriarchal type culture.

Conceptual Coherence

The borderline personality organisation theory does not consider the relationship between family and society in any depth. It considers the distal cause of male partner violence to be family mistreatment. In contrast to the feminist theories, it does not consider the larger social context within which the family operates. The important issue of the family's relationship to the larger culture will be further developed in Chapter Eight, where the final integrated theory is presented. The borderline personality organisation theory is important, however, because it introduces the conception of the self-generation of abuse. All other theories of MAFP operate on the assumption that the abuse occurs in response to some external incident.

6.3 SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Social learning theory provides a general theory of social behaviour and aggression that has developed from the work of Albert Bandura (1973, 1977, 1979). Social learning theory incorporates operant and classical theories of learning and these theories will, therefore, not be considered separately in this study. Social learning theory emphasizes that human behaviour is primarily learned through modelling and mediated through cognitions. Dutton (1995), Ganley (1989), and O'Leary (1988) have specifically applied social learning theory to MAFP and their analyses will form the basis of the following explication and appraisal. Aspects of Feldman's (1993) social learning theory explanation of criminal aggression and Renfrew's (1997) social learning theory approach to MAFP will also be included.

6.3.1 EXPLICATION OF SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

Ganley (1989) considers physical, psychological, emotional and sexual abuse to be the behaviour of concern, although Dutton (1995) and O'Leary (1988) both focus on explaining only physical abuse.

The Explanation

Following Bandura (1973), social learning theorists believe that a complete theory of aggressive behaviour must explain how aggressive patterns of behaviour are developed, what causes specific acts of aggression, and what then maintains aggressive actions.

(i) *Origins: How the Pattern of Male Partner Violence is Developed*

- Male partner violence is primarily learned indirectly through observational learning. Men, as adults and children, attend to modelled partner abuse, or parental aggression directed towards them, and when this is functionally successful, code this into permanent symbolic modes (Dutton, 1995). Male partner violence then exists within the man's behavioural repertoire.

- Men learn via observational learning *when* to abuse (for example, to achieve certain goals, when they feel frustrated or angry, or when they have been drinking), *where* to abuse (for example, in the privacy of their own home), and *who* to abuse (for example, a subordinate, or less powerful person).

- MAFP may also be incorporated directly into the repertoire through operant learning; that is, by trial-and-error experiences where behaviour is shaped by its consequences (Bandura, 1973).

- Both women and men similarly learn aggressive behaviours in this manner (Bandura, 1973).

(ii) *Instigators of the Performance of Each Act of Male Partner Violence*

- Acquired behaviours will not be demonstrated unless an appropriate stimulus or instigator exists in the contemporary environment.

- What constitutes a stimulus warranting aggression is shaped by an individual's learning history and may include emotional arousal, stress, anger, alcohol (O'Leary, 1988) or mental illness (Renfrew, 1997).

(iii) *Regulators or Maintainers of Aggression*

- Male partner violence like any other human behaviour is regulated by its external consequences, such as reinforcements and punishments.

- Male partner violence occurs to gain an anticipated payoff for aggressive actions. The aggressive response will only occur in response to a stimulus if the individual perceives, based on past experience, that aggression will be successful or appropriate (Renfrew, 1997).

- Male partner violence is maintained because of the variety of intermittent reinforcers associated with it, for example, establishment of control or power,

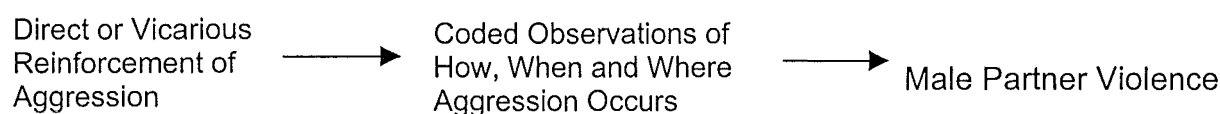
achievement of goals, satisfaction related to its expression, alleviation of aversive stimuli, or the suffering of the victims.

- Punishment for male partner violence is generally low, inconsistent and does not outweigh the reinforcers because of the low probability of detection, minimal social disapproval, minor legal consequences and delayed consequences (such as deterioration of relationship, separation, divorce) (Feldman, 1993).

- Men respond to internal consequences of MAFP. They self-reinforce (feel satisfaction) and self-punish (feel ashamed).

- Through the process of classical conditioning, various previously neutral stimuli, such as partner's presence, or physiological arousal, may become conditioned because of regular association with the display of violence to elicit future violence (Berkowitz, 1962). The partner, or physiological arousal, then becomes the conditioned stimulus that elicits aggression.

Figure 6: The Social Learning Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

Social learning theory appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- MAFP is both an individual and family problem.
- MAFP is learned behaviour. Men learn how, when, where and towards whom, to abuse.
- Men's learning of MAFP is a conscious process.
- MAFP is maintained by classical and operant conditioning.
- MAFP is instrumental, rational behaviour or intentional behaviour. Although rationality or reasoning skills may not always be well developed or always used effectively, men anticipate probable consequences and set themselves goals (Feldman, 1993).
- If a man has acquired aggression in his repertoire, he *will* be aggressive when

an appropriate instigating stimulus is presented, if he expects to be reinforced for it. Current MAFP is determined by presence of instigators and reinforcement. This suggests a deterministic view (Palmer & Brown, 1989) with men being regarded as passive reactors.³⁷

- (g) Men and women both similarly learn aggressive behaviours but do not similarly express aggression, because of differential learning histories for each gender regarding what instigates aggression and what the consequences will be.

The Type of Explanation

As with other theories of MAFP, there are both realist and instrumentalist interpretations of social learning theory. As portrayed by O'Leary (1988) it is based on, and limited to, measurable factors related to, and predictive of, spouse abuse; that is, measurable changes in *observable* response potentiality that occurs as a result of *reported* reinforced practice or *reported* observation of other's reinforced practice. O'Leary's social learning theory, therefore, does not have the ability to provide a full explanation as the most important causal mechanisms are likely to be hidden from direct view.

Ganley (1989) and Dutton (1995), however, both advocate realist forms of social learning theory. They emphasize the unobserved mental mechanisms that are the proximal causes of spouse aggression; that is, the coded observations regarding how, when and where, and to whom violence is performed, and how it is reinforced, that serve as guides for future action (Feldman, 1993). The distal cause of MAFP is the observed successful performance and the direct reinforcement of partner aggression. This realist version of social learning theory, as portrayed by Ganley (1989) and Dutton (1995), will be focused on for the remainder of this appraisal. Social learning theory is an example of a comparatively well developed single factor theory.

Applications

In terms of prevention of MAFP, social learning theory directly suggests eradicating both models of family aggression, and reinforcers of family aggression. In terms of treatment, Ganley (1989) points out that past learning history cannot be rewritten and, therefore, once an individual has aggression in their repertoire this cannot be reversed. Social learning theory argues, however, that future behaviour can

³⁷It could be argued that men's choice is incorporated in terms of self-reward, i.e., a man may override his learning history and *choose* not to be aggressive if he self-punishes for being aggressive. However, this self-punishment would have derived from the man's learning history, and so would not be true choice.

be changed primarily by raising the costs of aggressive behaviours and providing rewarding alternative behavioural options (Bandura, 1977). Ganley (1989) and Saunders (1989) suggest that the treatment of domestic violence would specifically involve: (1) modelling of alternative responses such as listening and non-abusive conflict resolution; (2) selective reinforcement in which aggression is not reinforced and non-aggression is reinforced, perhaps via the criminal justice system; (3) eliminating fantasized instigators of violent outbursts such as alcohol, stress or partner's actions; (4) developing competencies that provide new sources of reinforcers; and (5) reducing aversive social conditions that promote violence, such as the lower status of women.³⁸ Bandura (1977) suggests that the treatment of problems is best carried out in the setting that it occurs. As such, a social learning treatment intervention for MAFP would need to occur within the home, and involve members of the everyday community as agents of change.

6.3.2 EVALUATION OF SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Explanatory Breadth

Social learning theory can explain eight of the important facts in the MAFP domain. It can explain why not all men abuse their female partners (phenomenon 2). This is because not all men observe partner aggression or experience direct reinforcement for aggression, or if they do, they do not experience the acquired instigators or maintainers of this aggression.³⁹ Social learning theory can account for the high prevalence of male violence towards female partners (phenomenon 1), and the generally socially accepted and socially normative nature of MAFP (phenomenon 3). Although this theory does not address the nature of the general social system outside of the family in any detail, it acknowledges that within the traditional culture, aggression is regarded as inappropriate for women to use and is hence negatively sanctioned for women (Bandura, 1977).

Social learning theory directly explains the absence of husband battering (phenomenon 4). Generally men are said to be more aggressive than women because of: (1) men's greater size and strength which increases the probability that men's physically aggressive behaviours will produce their intended effect (e.g., to gain control), thereby resulting in positive reinforcement for abuse, (2) men and women have

³⁸This last point is unfortunately not clearly elucidated.

³⁹Social learning theory is also able to explain why some perpetrators of MAFP have never been victims or observers of MAFP, for in these situations they would have learned MAFP through direct reinforcement in the trial and error process.

different learning histories regarding what are appropriate instigators for aggression for each gender, and (3) men and women have different learning histories regarding the reinforcement of aggression.

Social learning theory can provide an explanation for the fact that men who are violent towards their partners report more positive attitudes towards the practice of partner violence (phenomenon 6). Bandura (1973) states that the utility, rather than the moral value, provides the primary basis for the initial emulation of aggression, and that moral justification can always be found for behaviours that are beneficial to the user. The more positive attitudes towards partner violence by domestic abuse offenders are, therefore, seen as a consequence of the men's violent behaviours.

Social learning theory can explain the repetition of MAFP by subsequent generations (phenomenon 11). Social learning theory posits that the major mechanism of learning is observational learning and that the family is one of the greatest learning arenas.⁴⁰ Social learning theory can also account for the fact that domestically violent men do not report more conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), or more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), for social learning theory does not link these causally to partner aggression.

Social learning theory cannot explain four of the important facts in the MAFP domain. Social learning theory cannot explain the existence of lesbian partner abuse as a phenomenon equivalent in prevalence to MAFP (phenomenon 5), for it suggests that aggression is not so likely to be easily learned by women because of their lesser size and strength (which increases the probability that their aggressive behaviours will not produce their intended effect), and when it is acquired it is less likely to be put into practice because of the general social sanctions for aggression by women. Social learning theory also cannot explain why men tend to abuse their women partners in the privacy of their own homes (phenomenon 10), or why they usually direct their aggression exclusively towards their female partners (phenomenon 9). Nor can it explain the empirical association between alcohol use/abuse (phenomenon 12). Social learning theory could explain why *individual* men may tend to be violent to their partners in the privacy of their own home, exclusively towards female partners, or when they have consumed alcohol, because they have learned very specifically, when, where, and whom to abuse. However, social learning theory provides no theoretical details to explain why there would be these tendencies in men as a group.

⁴⁰Social learning theory is also able to explain why some perpetrators of MAFP have never been victims or observers of MAFP, for MAFP can be learned directly through reinforcement in the trial and error process.

Practical Utility

Social learning theory has initial practical utility because it offers both treatment and prevention interventions. Social learning theory deemphasizes the social and cultural context of aggression. Although it acknowledges the subculture within which the individual moves, and the media as sources of learning, it primarily focuses on families as the key socialising agent. Comparatively little attention is paid to the fact that the roles modelled in the family reflect social roles and norms and/or the nature of the greater society (Palmer & Brown, 1989).

6.4 ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Various approaches within psychology are based around the assertion that domestically abusive men's behaviour can be explained in terms of their cognitions; that is, in terms of their attitudes, beliefs, or attributions. Russell (1995) presents one cognitive psychological theory, called *belief systems theory*, which suggests that abusive men's belief systems direct abusive men's behaviour. These beliefs are characterized by beliefs in male centrality, superiority, and deservedness and the acceptability of marital violence as a way of resolving conflict. These beliefs are said to be acquired by way of socialisation and vary on a continuum from those that are fully conscious to those that are so imbedded in the social fabric that they are accepted without conscious awareness or examination (Russell, 1995). This psychological approach is clearly very similar to the feminist approach presented in Chapter IV and it will, therefore, not be further considered within this section.

O'Leary and Vivian (1990) present a multifactorial psychological theory of MAFP that considers cognitive factors in general and attitudes in particular as relevant explanatory factors. Attitudes are identified as proximal causes of MAFP with no reference being made to the distal causes of these attitudes. This, however, is a minimally developed theory and so will also not be further considered in this section.

Holtzworth-Munroe and colleagues (Holtzworth-Munroe, 1988, 1992; Holtzworth-Munroe & Hutchinson, 1993) present a cognitive attributional theory of MAFP that has been developed from McFall's (1982) social information-processing model, which proposes that the attributions that abusive men make regarding responsibility and intention influence their behavioural responses. This is the most commonly considered

and well developed cognitive theory of MAFP to appear in the literature to date and it will, therefore, form the basis of the current section on cognitive theories of MAFP.

The similarity between some psychological cognitive theories and the feminist approach was noted above. It needs also to be noted that within sociology there are approaches that are very similar to the psychological cognitive theories of behaviour, but which have developed from different origins. For example, when attempting to explain human behaviour, symbolic interactionism considers the meaning and interpretations which actors attach to objects and social action. However symbolic interactionism has not been explicitly considered in relation to MAFP.

6.4.1 EXPLICATION OF ATTRIBUTION THEORY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

This theory focuses on physical violence and in particular on men's violence to female partners, because husband violence has more serious consequences than female abuse of male partners (Holtzworth-Munroe & Hutchinson, 1993). The problem is generally referred to as *marital violence*.

The Explanation

- Violent men's beliefs systems are characterized by faulty attributions such as attributions of hostile intent (for example, their partners did what they did to hurt them), and self promotion (for example, theirs was a justified retaliation, it was not their fault).

- The faulty attributions offered for marital violence influence behavioural reactions.

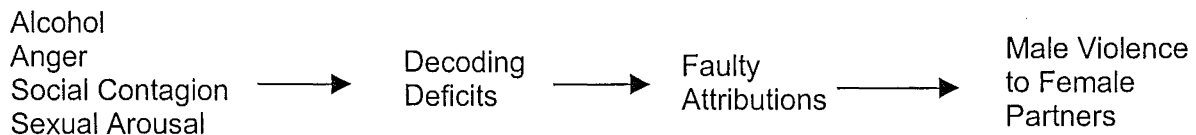
- These faulty attributions are the result of deficits in men's information processing/social skills.

- Social skills involve a series of sequential steps through which incoming stimuli or situational tasks are transformed into the responses or task performances, which then are judged as competent or incompetent. There are three steps involved which are, decoding, decision-making and enactment (McFall, 1982). In particular, decoding deficits result in marital violence.

- Decoding deficits are related to the reception, perception and interpretation of incoming social stimuli. Deficits in these areas result in the misconstrual of social situations and faulty attributions.

- Information processing may be influenced by transitory factors, such as alcohol consumption, anger, social contagion, or sexual arousal.

Figure 7: The Attribution Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

Attribution theory appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- Marital violence is primarily a problem related to individual men.
- Violent men's attributions result from information processing deficits.
- Marital violence results from abnormal male cognitive processes.
- Males and females do not differ in their fundamental information processing mechanisms.
- Attributions directly cause behaviour.
- Attributional processing occurs in non-routine situations that require thought; that is, making attributions is a conscious process (Holtzworth-Munroe, 1992).
- Marital violence involves rational thought processes, although they may be based on faulty information.
- Marital violence involves individual men's choice or intention.
- Men engage in unsolicited attributional activity for their violence.
- Marital violence is a result of state mechanism.

The Type of Explanation

Attributions are the proximal causes of MAFP. The immediate distal causes for attributions are information processing deficits, and the more distal causes are various transitory factors such as alcohol consumption and anger, although these latter aspects of the explanation are not developed at all.

This is a single factor theory that is understood by its advocates to be only one component of a full explanation of MAFP (Holtzworth-Munroe, 1988). This theory

frequently relies on its proximal explanation, which comprises attributions that are totally conscious, observable and reportable, suggesting that this might be an instrumentalist theory. However, as it postulates unobserved, underlying information processing deficits as the distal causal factor, it is realist in nature and will, therefore, be further evaluated.

Applications

The practical application of this theory is not considered in any depth in the literature. However, as marital violence is conceptualized as an information processing or social skills deficit, treatment based on this theory would likely focus on addressing the unique faulty attributions of the individual violent man.

6.4.2 EVALUATION OF ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Explanatory Breadth

Attribution theory can explain five of the important phenomena previously identified in Chapter Three. It can explain those men who do not abuse (phenomenon 2) in terms of the absence of information processing deficits. The theory can also account for the facts that domestically abusive men do not report more conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), or more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), because it does not consider these factors to be causally related to the problem.

This theory can directly account for the more positive reported attitudes towards partner violence of domestically assaultive men (phenomenon 6), because this theory specifically states that violent men's belief systems are characterized by faulty attributions such as attributions of victim responsibility and/or self-promotion. Alcohol use is also specifically mentioned as one of the factors that cause information processing deficits and this theory can, therefore, directly explain the alcohol/male partner violence association (phenomenon 12).

Attribution theory, however, cannot explain seven of the important phenomena identified in Chapter Three. Attribution theory provides no theoretical details to explain why MAFP is very common in heterosexual males (phenomenon 1). Furthermore, attribution theory cannot explain the variations in abusive behaviours that occur between groups, for it provides no theoretical details to suggest why faulty attributions would be anything other than evenly distributed within the general population and,

therefore, between different groups. This theory, therefore, cannot simultaneously explain lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5), and the absence of husband battering (phenomenon 4), and the fact that male partner abuse tends to run in families (phenomenon 11).

As attribution focuses totally on individual causal factors and makes no reference to social factors, it is unable to explain the relatively socially accepted nature of MAFP (phenomenon 3). This theory does not explain why men tend to be abusive towards their partners in private (phenomenon 10). Nor can it explain why men generally direct their violence towards their female partners (phenomenon 9), for there is no theoretical details which would explain why interactions with partners would result in more information processing deficits, and hence, faulty attributions.

Practical Utility

Attribution theory has initial practical utility because it offers modifiable casual factors. However, as it is suggestive only of treatment interventions it is of limited practical utility. Furthermore, this theory has conservative social implications, because it does not consider the likely social context of individual attributions and thereby requires no changes to be made to the larger social and cultural system.

6.5 COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL THEORY

Hamberger and Lohr (1989) present a *cognitive-behavioural theory* that attempts to explain MAFP in terms of both learning principles and cognitive processes. It is noted that this theory overlaps both social learning theory and attributional theory to some extent.⁴¹ Cognitive-behavioural theory is generally considered separately in the literature and will be considered separately here.

6.5.1 EXPLICATION OF COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL THEORY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

Hamberger and Lohr (1989) attempt to explain specific instances of physical and non-physical control which is variously called *battering*, *spouse abuse*, or *wife abuse*.

⁴¹Cognitive-behavioural theory's *inaccurate labelling tendencies* are very similar to attribution theory's *faulty attributions*. Both social learning theory and cognitive-behavioural theory incorporate both direct and vicarious learning.

The male abuser is usually referred to as the *batterer*. Spouse abuse is considered to be a subclass of other violent and aggressive behaviours.

The Explanation

- Any specific instance of battering involves the following.

(i) *Cognitive Labelling*. Through the process of classical conditioning, language or imagery can come to elicit a negative emotional response. For example, the unconditioned stimulus is feeling abandoned, the conditioned stimulus is labelling their partner as a bad person/seeing their partner talking to another man, and the unconditioned response is negative emotional response. For the batterer faulty labelling occurs.

(ii) *Negative Emotional Response*. A negative emotional state, such as anger or hurt, constitutes a motivational state and directs the batterer to reduce or eliminate this aversive feeling.

(iii) *Cognitive Verbal Response*. The man instructs himself what to do to reduce the negative emotional arousal. This involves problem solving, interpreting, reasoning, rules, and verbal self-instruction. In the case of battering, the reasoning sequence is usually not consistent with respect to actual events; that is, faulty reasoning and problem solving occurs.

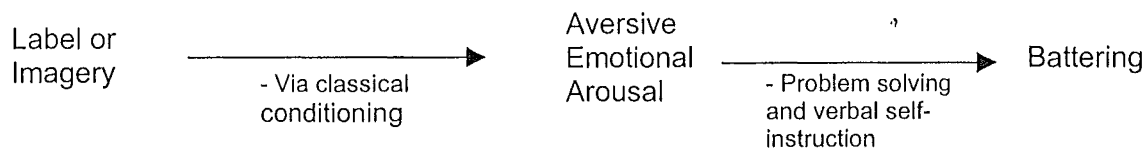
(iv) *Behavioural Response*. Verbal abuse, control, physical or sexual assault is likely to occur because of the faulty labelling and reasoning. Also, there are likely to be deficits of non-violent responses.

(v) *Reinforcement and Cognitive Labelling*. The behaviour continues because the batterer gets what he wants and/or because the behaviour is subsequently labelled as appropriate or justified.

- This learning process outlined above can take place experientially and/or vicariously.

- This learning process may not be a linear process as portrayed here. For different people, different combinations of these causal factors may occur.

Figure 8: The Cognitive-Behavioural Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

Cognitive-behavioural theory appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- (a) Battering is largely a problem of the inaccurate labelling and/or verbal self-instruction of individual men (Hamberger & Lohr, 1989).
- (b) These labels and self-instructions are learned.
- (c) Battering does not represent loss of control; it is purposeful and under the control of the batterer. Battering behaviour is intentional and functional and self-produced. The batterer labels and creates his own negative emotional arousal state and then instructs himself what to do to reduce negative arousal (Hamberger & Lohr, 1989).
- (d) Batterers are different than other men in terms of their labelling and problem solving abilities or skills.
- (e) Battering is the result of state or transitory mechanisms.
- (f) Men and women do not have innate differences in terms of their labelling and problem solving abilities.

The Type of Explanation

This theory offers a proximal explanation of MAFP. Hamberger & Lohr (1989) view the cognitive-behavioural approach as offering the most comprehensive, molecular, proximal analysis of the causes of battering. They suggest that their theory is compatible with theories that focus on distal factors such as sociocultural norms, because individual men's cognitive processes will reflect the prevailing sociocultural and political norms and practices relating to women. For example, boys socially learn to label girls in demeaning ways and that it is acceptable to use violence towards a subordinate to achieve certain goals. As this theory posits unobserved, underlying, cognitive mechanisms, as well as mechanisms of motivation, it can reasonably be defined as a realist theory.

Applications

Within Hamberger and Lohr's (1989) framework, MAFP is conceived of largely as a problem of inaccurate labelling, verbal self-instruction and/or problem solving. The

individual batterer is seen as being responsible for his own behaviour and capable of learning new behaviours. Intervention focuses on the multiple components of battering behaviour and suggests a flexible intervention approach based upon the identification of individual abuse patterns.

Saunders (1989) outlines the following components of a cognitive-behavioural treatment intervention:

(i) *Cognitive restructuring techniques*. This involves changing the inaccurate labelling and verbal self-instructions. Treatment attempts to make changes from self-defeating statements to self-enhancing statements, for example, *She isn't a bad person because she is talking to another man*, or *I don't have to always have my own way*.

(ii) *Arousal Reduction*. This involves reducing physiological arousal, which is aversive, by way of techniques such as relaxation training or biofeedback.

(iii) *Classical Conditioning*. Once relaxation is mastered, it can be combined with a series of anger-producing scenes, until the anger is lessened or eliminated.

(iv) *Contingency Management*. This involves the application of operant principles so that the immediate consequences of behaviour are modified.

(v) *Modelling and Rehearsal*. This involves helping men to acquire assertive and other social skills that are incompatible with aggression. This may involve skills to help cope with criticism, make requests, say no assertively, express feelings, and/or empathize with other's feelings.

6.5.2 EVALUATION OF COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL THEORY

Explanatory Breadth

Cognitive-behavioural theory can simply explain four of the important phenomena in the field. It can explain men who do not abuse domestically (phenomenon 2), in terms of men who do not inaccurately label and problem solve. Cognitive-behavioural theory would expect domestically violent men to have more positive attitudes towards partner violence (phenomenon 6), as the theory suggests that men continue to batter because they label it as appropriate. A simple auxiliary assumption would be that a label is equivalent to an attitude. This theory could explain why domestically violent men do not report more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), or more conservative gender attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), because it does not consider these factors to be causally related to wife abuse.

Cognitive-behavioural theory has difficulty explaining eight of the important phenomena that have been identified. Cognitive-behavioural theory cannot on its own explain the socially accepted nature of MAFP (phenomenon 3); because it is presented as a proximal explanation that focuses on individual causal factors. Hamberger and Lohr (1989) acknowledge the social origins of men's faulty labelling and problem solving and present the theory as complementary to social explanations, such as feminist theories. Similarly this theory cannot explain why this pattern of abuse occurs predominantly towards female partners (phenomenon 9), although again its explanation could be considered complementary to theories that do explain this.

Cognitive-behavioural theory cannot explain the differential rates of partner abuse within heterosexual male, heterosexual female, and lesbian populations, and within different families (phenomena 1, 4, 5 & 6), for it provides no theoretical details to suggest why faulty labelling and problem solving would be unevenly distributed between these different groups. This theory also cannot explain why MAFP occurs predominantly in private (phenomenon 10).

Cognitive-behavioural theory cannot explain the correlation between alcohol use and male partner violence (phenomenon 12), although it could possibly explain this if alcohol was considered to operate as a conditioned stimulus to a negative emotional arousal. This possibility, however, is not considered in the theoretical writings.

Practical Utility

This theory on its own has initial practical utility in that it suggests treatment interventions, although this is limited because it offers nothing in terms of prevention of the problem. In relation to the contingency management aspect of the treatment package suggested, it needs to be noted that it is unlikely that a relatively short number of hours of providing alternative reinforcement will counterbalance the social reinforcement for MAFP within a patriarchal society over abusive men's lifetime (Edleson, 1996). Although Hamberger and Lohr (1989) acknowledge that individual men's cognitive processes may reflect the prevailing sociocultural and political norms, when the theory is considered on its own without incorporating the social context it has conservative implications.

6.6 EMOTIONAL AGGRESSION THEORY

Berkowitz (1993) suggests the *emotional aggression theory* as a revision of the frustration aggression hypothesis and directly applies it to domestic violence. It is noted that the theory of emotional aggression could equally be classified as a biological theory.

6.6.1 EXPLICATION OF THE THEORY OF EMOTIONAL AGGRESSION

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

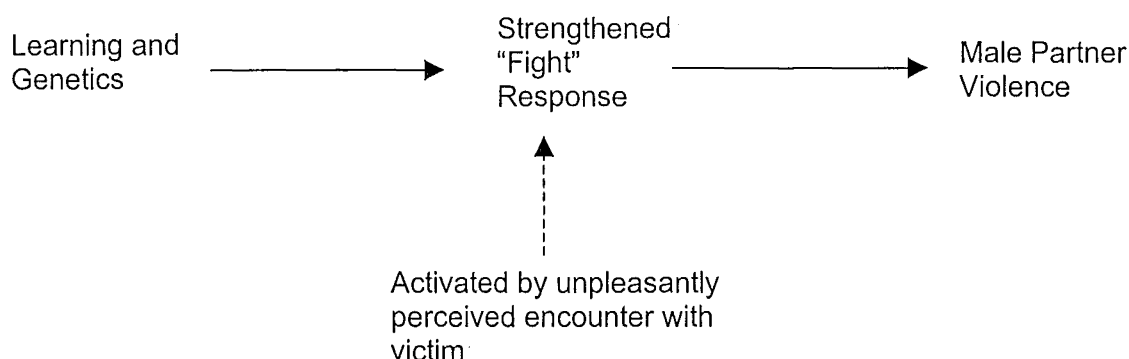
Berkowitz (1993) attempts to explain deliberate attempts to injure within the family, and so attempts to explain all forms of family violence, including wife to husband violence. Berkowitz (1993) suggests that much of the violence in families is similar in important ways to much of the aggression that takes place outside the home. Within this theoretical perspective the problem is generally referred to as either *domestic violence* or *domestic aggression*.

The Explanation

- The display of aggression is affected by a sequence of processes.
- Domestic violence is in large part an emotional reaction to a state of affairs that men perceive as being unpleasant.
- Domestic aggression is precipitated by an unpleasant encounter between the assailant and victim.
- This unpleasant encounter generates a negative effect, which then generates what is referred to as a *fight* tendency. Humans are biologically disposed to cope with noxious stimuli (negative effect) in two ways: by escaping from the dangerous or unpleasant situation (the flight tendency), or by destroying the sources of displeasure (the fight tendency). The relative strength of these opposing tendencies are determined by genetic, past learning, and situational factors.
- The first automatic and involuntary reactions to negative stimuli can be modified quickly as the aroused persons think about their feelings, the instigating events, their conceptions of what emotions they might be experiencing, and the social rules regarding the emotions and actions that may be appropriate under the circumstances.

The initial rudimentary anger experience may be intensified, enriched and differentiated, suppressed, or eliminated altogether by these cognitions.⁴²

Figure 9: The Emotional Aggression Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The theory of emotional aggression appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- (a) Humans are biologically predisposed to respond to noxious stimuli by either fight or flight.
- (b) Domestic aggression is the fight response generated by negative effect (Berkowitz, 1993).
- (c) Domestic aggression is automatic, impulsive, involuntary, and expressive (Berkowitz, 1993).
- (d) Domestic aggression is behaviour that occurs when people are extremely excited and have lost conscious, deliberate control (Berkowitz, 1993). It is aggression when values and constraints are out of mind.
- (e) Domestic aggression is an impulsive act done with little thought, premeditation or planning. It has the primary aim of injuring or destroying the victim (Berkowitz, 1993).
- (f) Aggression-supportive cognitions may play a minor role in domestic aggression.
- (g) This theory adheres to the association network conception of emotions: each emotion is conceived as a network in which the various components are linked together associatively. Each emotional state is a collection of particular feelings, expressive-motor reactions, thoughts, and memories that are associated with each other. When one part is activated other parts tend to be activated (Berkowitz, 1993).

⁴²It is noted that this theory is similar to the cognitive-behavioural theory presented. Both suggest a learned aggressive response that is mediated by cognitions. However, whereas cognitive-behavioural theory emphasizes cognitive mediatory processes, this theory clearly emphasizes the automatic nature of the response.

The Type of Explanation

This theory clearly emphasizes the aggression generating effects of unpleasant occurrences, which are proximal causes of MAFP. This is a realist theory that postulates the unobserved, underlying fight response which is generated by an unpleasant encounter.

Applications

The literature relating to the theory of emotional aggression does not provide any direct suggestions for treatment, although it clearly would suggest prevention by way of strengthening the flight response in men's learning histories, relative to this fight response. Berkowitz (1993) suggests, however, that punishment or deterrence will not likely work, as it will for instrumental aggressors, for this sort of aggression is too emotionally charged and men will, therefore, not be able to hold back their emotions and recall the consequences the last time they offended. This is because the threat of punishment dissuades people from misbehaving only to the degree that they are thinking of this possible negative consequence when they are tempted to transgress (Berkowitz, 1993). This theory could also be used to suggest catharsis as a treatment, although evidence suggests that make-believe aggression may tend to increase rather than to lower the likelihood of further aggression (Berkowitz, 1993).

6.6.2 EVALUATION OF THE THEORY OF EMOTIONAL AGGRESSION

Explanatory Breadth

The theory of emotional aggression can simply explain five of the phenomena identified in the field. It can explain men who do not abuse their partners (phenomenon 2) in terms of these men having not learned the fight response, or having learned it, but having not encountered events that are perceived as unpleasant. The theory of emotional aggression can explain the fact that domestically violent men do not report more conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), or more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), because this theory does not posit attitudes to women or gender schema as causal mechanisms.

The theory of emotional aggression can explain why MAFP runs in families (phenomenon 11), because the relative strength of the fight or flight response is said to be determined by genetics, past learning, or situational factors, which all to a greater or lesser degree can reasonably be assumed to run in families. This theory can also explain the correlation between alcohol and male partner violence (phenomenon 12),

as this is directly addressed in the theoretical writings. The theory of emotional aggression suggests that alcohol exacerbates the fight tendency or aggressive arousal and, thereby, makes overt aggression more likely to occur.

This theory, however, cannot explain seven of the important phenomena in the field. It cannot explain the prevalence of male partner violence (phenomenon 1), for there is nothing in theoretical propositions to say why the unpleasant events between men and women, the learning histories that strengthen fight response, or aggression supportive cognitions, would be prevalent within the male population. Similarly this theory cannot explain the relative social acceptability of male partner abuse (phenomenon 3), because it does not provide theoretical details that relate to social factors.

The theory of emotional aggression cannot explain both the absence of the phenomenon of husband battering (phenomenon 4) and lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5). Although, it could possibly explain the absence of husband battering if it were accepted that relative to males, females predominantly learn the flight response (auxiliary assumption). This, however, is a relatively major auxiliary assumption as this theory provides no details to suggest why this would occur. Also, if this auxiliary assumption was utilized, it would prevent this theory explaining lesbian partner abuse.

Although the theory of emotional aggression does acknowledge the role of cognitions in supporting or suppressing aggressive actions, the main thrust of this theory relates to male partner violence in a much narrower sense. That is, it generally refers to male partner aggression as a purely automatic, uncontrollable, emotional reaction to an aversive event, exempt from moderating cognitive influences (Berkowitz, 1993). This theory, therefore, cannot adequately explain why domestically violent men generally report more positive attitudes towards violence than non-domestically violent men (phenomenon 6). For similar reasons this theory has difficulty explaining why men predominantly direct their abuse towards their female partners (phenomenon 9), or do this mainly in private (phenomenon 10), if the behaviour is understood to be automatic and uncontrollable.

Practical Utility

This theory has initial practical utility because it is suggestive of prevention. However, this practical utility is weakened because it also promotes the idea of the *loss of control*. As argued previously before, even if loss of control does occur at times, focusing on this deflects from the fact that any loss of control would be only momentary

or temporary. Following the overt aggressive act men generally make no effort to ensure that they are not aggressive in the future.

Conceptual Coherence

The emotional aggression explanation incorporates cognitions as causal factors in male partner violence. However, as noted above, this theory predominantly refers to male partner violence in a much narrower sense, as a purely automatic, uncontrollable, emotional reaction to an aversive event (Berkowitz, 1993), a position which is conceptually difficult to integrate with cognitive explanations, which suggest conscious thought and interpretation. Although explanations that suggest uncontrollable and automatic behaviour are not necessarily ultimately contradictory to those which suggest deliberate, consciously executed behaviour, their specific relationships need to be clarified in detail. The theory would benefit from development in this area.

6.7 THE ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Some psychologists follow sociologists in believing that human behaviour can best be understood by taking into account aspects of the environment beyond the individual and their family. However, because of discipline differences, these psychologists have labelled their work as the ecological perspective and have tended to draw references mainly from the psychological literature (Bersani & Chen, 1988). This ecological perspective originated from the work of Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979) and has most commonly been considered in relation to child abuse (Belsky, 1980; Garbarino, 1977).

The ecological perspective suggests that MAFP is determined by multiple forces in the individual (ontogenic, predisposing), family (microsystem), community (mesosystem), society (exosystem or ecosystem) and culture (macrosystem), and that a nested relationship exists between these causative factors (Dutton, 1985). This model does suggest some causal mechanisms or explanatory principles. For example, one important causal principle in this model is the ideological support for the supremacy of men and the use of physical force which permits MAFP (Garbarino, 1977). Another is that the relevant features of the environment include, not only its objective properties, but also the way in which it is perceived by people (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Ecological psychology's main role, however, is to offer a descriptive or taxonomic system to organize the different types of causes of MAFP into a theoretically significant

framework, without identifying the causal mechanisms responsible for the nesting of these factors (Burgess & Youngblade, 1988; Dwyer et al., 1995). It, therefore, has much in common with the proximal-distal model outlined in Chapter Three. As the ecological perspective is primarily a taxonomic system, rather than a coherent explanation, it will not be considered further in this study. It will, however, be revisited in Chapter Eight, when it will be utilized in its taxonomic capacity in the integrated theory of MAFP.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

Sociological theories suggest that social structures and social institutions, particularly the family, have an important causal role to play in MAFP. Although sociological perspectives give some credence to variables which are central to feminist analyses, such as patriarchy and power, they consider these variables as just one of many classes of social influences. There have been many sociologists who have contributed to the study of MAFP, although the most prolific, visible and influential sociological work on domestic violence has been done by Richard Gelles and Murray Straus, and their students. It is their work that will, therefore, generally be emphasized in this chapter.

This chapter will explicate and evaluate seven sociological theories. The sociological theories that appear in the literature and that will be considered in this study are subculture theory, conflict theory, systems theory, structural theory, exchange/social control theory, resource theory, and finally one integrated theory presented by Gelles and Straus (1979).

7.1 THE SUBCULTURE OF VIOLENCE THEORY

This theory was first proposed by Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) and is regarded as the most fully developed and widely applied sociological explanation of violence (Gelles, 1988). This is a theory of general violence that is routinely applied to the problem of family violence.

7.1.1 EXPLICATION OF SUBCULTURE OF VIOLENCE THEORY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

This theory attempts to explain physical violence between all family members; that is, spouse (male to female and vice versa), sibling, and elder violence. It attempts to explain in particular the higher rates of MAFP in certain lower socio-economic or ethnic sectors of society, assuming these to be established phenomena.

The Explanation

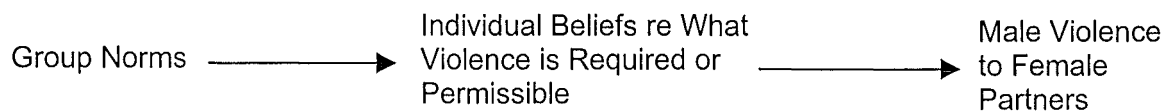
- Violence is compliance to the prevailing social norms: it is the normal response to certain stimuli, situations, or conditions, within a particular subculture.

- The differential distribution of violence in the lower socio-economic sectors of our society is, therefore, a function of differential cultural norms and values concerning violence. These norms reflect the range of conduct that is expected, ranging from the permissible to the required.

- Men in lower socio-economic classes are more violent because their cultural rules legitimate or require violence in response to a wide variety of conditions.

- People are said to be born into a subculture and incorporate the subcultural norms through the socialisation process. Violent behaviour is also modelled and rewarded, and failure to be violent in a circumstance that this subculture dictates is appropriate for violence, will be punished by ridicule or loss of status.

Figure 10: The Subculture of Violence Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The subculture theory appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- Male partner violence is a cultural phenomenon.
- Male partner violence is a learned behaviour.
- Men who are violent towards their partners have belief systems that are different from those of men who are not violent.
- Violent men's belief systems are not necessarily conscious.
- Men's belief systems are traits or permanent mechanisms.
- Men's belief systems cause their behaviour.
- There are higher rates of MAFP in certain lower socio-economic and/or ethnic sectors of society.

The Type of Explanation

Subculture theory posits distal causal factors such as the prevailing social norms, and also the more proximal causal factors such as men's learned belief

systems. However, it is generally regarded as a single factor explanation, where violence is seen as compliance to prevailing social norms. This is a realist theory as it postulates underlying unobservable causes.

Applications

The application of subculture theory is not explicitly addressed in the literature, although this approach would likely suggest treatment interventions focusing on changing men's belief systems, and preventative efforts focusing on changing social norms within violent groups.

7.1.2 EVALUATION OF THE SUBCULTURAL EXPLANATION

Explanatory Breadth

The subcultural explanation can explain six of the phenomena identified in Chapter Three. It can explain men who do not abuse (phenomenon 2) in terms of subcultural variations. Men who are not violent to their partner belong to a subculture where the norms and values do not promote violence. This theory can directly explain domestically assaultive men's more positive attitudes to use of violence towards their female partners (phenomenon 6). Subculture theory suggests that domestically assaultive men's more positive attitudes towards violence directly cause their more violent behaviour, and that these positive attitudes originate from their subcultural position. The explanatory breadth of subculture theory would not, however, be weakened if this fact was not true, for socialized beliefs are likely to be largely unreportable. This theory can also explain the fact that physically assaultive men do not report more conservative attitudes towards women than non-assaultive men (phenomenon 7), or that assaultive husbands were not more likely to report a more traditional masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), because this theory does not considered these factors to be causally related to male partner violence.

Subcultural theory can directly explain why MAFP runs in families (phenomenon 11), because people within the same family are born into the same subculture. Children, therefore, learn the same values towards violence as their parents do. Subcultural theory could also relatively easily explain the empirical fact that alcohol is also associated with male partner violence (phenomenon 12), for within subcultures that promote violence, an important belief promoting and justifying this violence, would likely be that when men drink alcohol, it causes them to be violent.

Subcultural theory, however, cannot adequately explain six of the phenomena identified in Chapter Three. It cannot explain the prevalence of MAFP (phenomenon 1), because it does not posit any one dominant culture, such as patriarchy. Subcultural theory similarly cannot account for the socially normative nature of MAFP generally in contemporary societies (phenomenon 3).

This theory cannot explain the absence of a phenomenon of husband battering (phenomenon 4). As Yllö (1988) points out, subcultural theory attempts to explain violence in subcultures, such as the working class or particular race/ethnic groups, but fails to recognize perhaps one of the major *subcultures*, the male culture. The reality that within all subcultures, violence within heterosexual partnerships is overwhelmingly a male phenomenon, is a non-issue. This seems to be so thoroughly taken for granted that it is not regarded as requiring explanation (Yllö, 1988).

Subcultural theory cannot explain why lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5) occurs when female perpetrated heterosexual partner abuse does not exist to any extent. Subcultural theory cannot explain why this partner violence usually occurs in private (phenomenon 10), for this would not be expected if this behaviour was compatible with the prevailing norms and values. Subcultural theory also cannot account for the fact that, for many men, abuse is directed exclusively towards their female partners (phenomenon 9). This theory does not consider abuse, but considers only violence and suggests that domestically violent men are generally violent and, therefore, also violent outside the home.

Practical Utility

This theory has initial practical utility, because it suggests both treatment and prevention interventions. However, as with patriarchal treatments, the difficulty would be that attempting to change men's belief systems in a small number of treatments may be insufficient to counter the life-long influence of a subculture.

7.2 CONFLICT THEORY

Conflict theory is a general sociological theory originally associated with names such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Ralf Dahrendorf and Lewis Coser. It has been developed more recently by Gelles and Straus (Gelles & Straus, 1979; Straus, 1990) to also explain family violence. Conflict theory has become a particularly important theory in the field, because it has had considerable influence on how family violence has been measured and conceptualized. The *Conflict Tactics Scale* (Straus,

1979),⁴³ which was developed from this theoretical understanding of family violence, has become an instrument that dominates family violence research to an extent rarely matched by other scales in other fields (Yllö, 1988). The Conflict Tactics Scale has been adopted by a wave of researchers who are likely to have never explored or questioned its underlying theoretical assumptions (Yllö, 1988). The predominance of this instrument has resulted in the wide acceptance of conflict theory itself.

Conflict theory suggests that all family members have different interests or personal agendas, and that as a result conflict is an inevitable part of family life. Violence is considered to be one of the overt tactics family members use to manage conflict or to achieve personal interests, when other means of conflict management are ineffective. The fundamental, and proximal causal factors which lead to violence are said to be the different interests of the family members (Gelles & Straus, 1979). Family violence is, therefore, considered to be an instrumental behaviour, which is both deliberate and conscious.

As it stands, conflict theory is an instrumentalist *explanation* based on the relationship between observable entities; that is, the relationship between the personal interests of family members, such as, "whose television show will be watched at eight?" or "should money be saved or spent on a vacation?" (Gelles & Straus, 1979, p. 556), and the tactics that are used to manage the conflict. An additional limitation of this theory is that the empirical generalisations upon which it rests, may be based upon empirical findings that are neither stable nor general. Feminists for one challenge the focus on personal interests by pointing out that much violence in the family occurs outside of the context of a conflict of interests and instead occurs within a context of power and control (Rhodes, 1992). Within the interpretation of conflict theory that has been developed by sociologists in the area of family violence,⁴⁴ conflict of interest of individual family members is considered in isolation from the institutionalized and gendered power structure of the family. Conflict and personal interests are, however, not gender neutral. Family conflict occurs between members who hold very different positions in the social order and not simply between those with differing personal agendas. They may all have different interests, but the conflict that ensues will likely be structured by expectations of gender and generational entitlement (Breines & Gordon,

⁴³The Conflict Tactics Scale measures violence in the family by asking questions about the various ways in which family members have *resolved* conflicts in the past (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980).

⁴⁴Ralf Dahrendorf (1959), an early conflict theorist, argued that the differential distribution of authority (legitimated power) invariably becomes the determining factor of systematic social conflicts, and that the identification of the variously equipped authority roles is, therefore, the first task of conflict analysis. Current conflict theory within the family violence area has, however, lost sight of this basis for conflict, and has instead developed the original theory to portray conflict as being based on personal matters within a family group devoid of institutionalised power asymmetry.

1983; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Yllö, 1988). A more accurate understanding of family violence will, therefore, occur if it is recognized that a man's personal agenda is socially constructed in a way that entitles him in every way as a husband, and legitimates his behaviour (Dobash & Dobash, 1992).

These important conceptual limitations have been noted because of the immense influence of conflict theory. However, as this theory is an instrumentalist theory, it will not be further explicated or appraised within this study.

7.3 SYSTEMS THEORY

Systems theory is a relatively recent theoretical perspective in the field of family violence put forward by Straus (1973), Giles-Sims (1983) and, Gelles and Maynard (1987). The theory was initially developed in an attempt to provide an alternative to the older, dominant sociological theoretical frameworks, which were considered deficient because they focused on models of linear causation.⁴⁵

Systems theory focuses specifically on the issue of what is referred to as *wife beating* and considers this to be a system product that results from the ongoing patterns of interaction within the family system (Straus, 1973). Wife beating is, therefore, seen as the product of interdependent causal processes, including the pre-existing behaviour patterns of system members and the system processes that lead to stability or change in patterns of behaviour over time (Giles-Sims, 1983). Within this framework it is suggested that the immediate context of a man's violence regulates his behaviour, and that, therefore, the behaviour of a violent man and the behaviour of his partner are interrelated. As Giles-Sims (1983) puts it, the sequence of actions and reactions of the family members that surround each violent incident can, therefore, be seen as a continuous causal chain, each reaction becoming in turn a precipitant.

Systems theory primarily attempts to explain the maintenance and escalation of wife battering, rather than to identify its initial cause. Systems theory suggests that violence, as a mode of operation within the system, increases when there is positive feedback, through processes such as, labelling, the creation of secondary conflict over the use of violence, the reinforcement of the actor's use of violence through successful use of such violence, and the development of violent role expectations and self-concepts. Under any of these circumstances, violence becomes an element in a

⁴⁵Although this theory could readily be classified as a psychological theory, it is considered here as a sociological theory, as this is how it is generally understood within the literature.

violence amplifying system, which may then stabilize at a higher level through negative feedback or the dampening process (Straus, 1973).

Systems theory, therefore, views wife beating as a problem relating to problematic transactional patterns of couples (Gelles & Maynard, 1987). Wife battering is viewed as a couple's problem with communication between the spouses being a critical factor: "One can never separate victim from victimizer, dominance from submission, aggressiveness from passivity, and so on. Each description is one half of an interactional pattern, not a personality characteristic residing in an individual" (Lane & Russell, 1989, p. 138).

The strength of this framework is that it considers processes over time. Often traditional positions provide only a punctuation of reality at a certain point in time. The systems framework, however, has severe limitations. The systems approach has had considerable influence in shaping family systems therapy, and has been widely criticized because it implies that wife battering is a mutual problem to be solved, and this almost inevitably leads to the implication of mutual responsibility (Goldner et al., 1990). Systems theory implies that the woman partner could, and should, respond to control her husband's feelings and actions, for his future violence is dependent on her response to his initial violence. For example, in one systems driven intervention, the female partner is expected to learn to recognize when her partner is beginning to lose his temper and beginning to get to the point when he is going to hit her, so that she can learn when he needs time-out (Lane & Russell, 1989). In another systems theoretical model, a man's future violence is depicted as being mediated by his woman partner's response; that is, whether she gave in, forgave, denied his anger or regarded it as an isolated incident (Giles-Sims, 1983).

It is implied in systems theory and therapy, that the woman partner's dysfunctional response caused the abuse to continue. Instead her dysfunctional ways of operating can be viewed as a survival response to an impossible situation. If a man continually explodes at minor things, this will alter his partner's behaviour, but this does not mean that his partner's altered behaviour caused the initial explosions. It is noted that in the literature on sexual offending, if a woman is raped and did not fight at the time or tell anyone afterwards, then this is not interpreted as a pivotal event in the future offending of the man. Rather, the emphasis is placed on how the offender justified, or cognitively restructured, the victim's fearful silence into the belief that she condoned it (e.g., see Ward et al., 1995).

Systems theory has also been widely criticized because it fails to adequately address the aspects of a system beyond the family; that is, the sociocultural aspects of

the system. It ignores the institutionalized power asymmetry within the family, for example, the fact that the victim may not have sufficient power in the relationship to withdraw rewards or enforce punishments and survive the abuse (Ganley, 1989), or that the system beyond the family condones certain forms of violence or abuse.

Although systems theory refers to causal factors such as labelling, self concepts and role expectations, which are potentially realist in nature, these concepts are extremely underdeveloped theoretically. Their causal mechanisms are not considered, but rather they are just suggested as possible abuse escalating factors. Systems theory is essentially an instrumentalist theory, and, like ecological theory, it provides a structure for investigating rather than an explanation. It will, therefore, not be further explicated and appraised within this study.

7.4 SOCIAL STRUCTURAL THEORY

This theory has largely been put forward by Gelles (1974) and Farrington (1980) and it is their work that will be focused on here. This theory, which can also be referred to as stress theory, is considered by its proponents to extend subcultural theory.⁴⁶

7.4.1 EXPLICATION OF STRUCTURAL THEORY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

This theory attempts to explain the occurrence of physical violence in families. In particular, it attempts to explain the greater occurrence of the problem in the family compared to other social institutions, and the greater occurrence of the problem of family violence for people occupying lower socio-economic positions.

The Explanation

•Violence is a response to high levels of stress, deprivation and frustration, or threats to identity, that can be directly learned through rewards, or can be learned from role models.

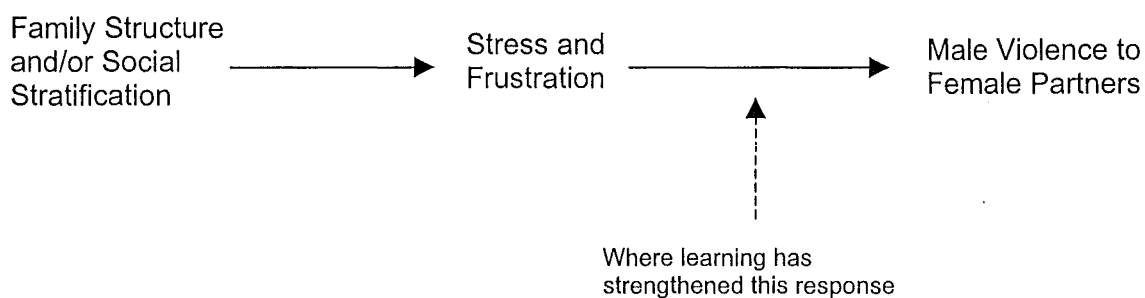
⁴⁶It is suggested that the subculture of violence is in fact a codification of the forms of behaviour that reflect the structural realities (the physical and social environment) of the subcultural group (Gelles & Straus, 1979).

- The structure and characteristics of the family as a social institution creates many frustrations and stresses, and this is, therefore, a very violence prone institution.

- People occupying lower socioeconomic positions (less education, occupational status, and/or income), face many more frustrations and stresses, and more violence, therefore, occurs in these sectors.

- When structural conditions lead to violence as a characteristic mode of coping with the circumstances of a group, violence becomes codified in the form of values and norms which justify and simplify carrying out the violent acts in response to frustration. Children born into these structural conditions learn that violence is an appropriate response to stress or frustration and they are also socialized into norms that approve of violence.

Figure 11: The Structural Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The structural theory appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- (a) Violence is an easily and commonly, directly learned human response to frustration, deprivation and stress, as opposed to other responses like withdrawal or suicide (Gelles, 1974).
- (b) Violence as a response can also be learned via modelling.
- (c) Men and women respond similarly to frustration, deprivation and stress.
- (d) Violence is primarily the result of state or transitory mechanisms resulting from structural conditions.
- (e) Violence is unevenly distributed in society; that is, it is more prevalent in the family than other social institutions, and more prevalent in the lower socio-economic classes (Gelles, 1974).

The Type of Explanation

The distal cause of family violence is the family structure and general social stratification. The proximal cause is the frustration, stress and deprivation that these structures cause, as well as the social norms that develop from the social structures. This is a single factor theory that is still relatively poorly developed.

Structural theory posits stress, deprivation and frustration, and the learning of the aggressive response, as underlying, unobserved causes of family violence. It, therefore, is a realist theory, although these explanatory mechanisms are not well developed.

Applications

The treatment or prevention implications of this theory are not explicitly discussed in the literature. Gelles (1993a) argues that sociological theories cannot necessarily be used to inform clinical practice. Structural theory would, however, be suggestive of interventions that reduced the stress producing nature of the family and general social stratification (Farrington, 1980), and which also addressed the learning of the violent response. As this theory suggests that violence is learned directly and through modelling, the treatment interventions suggested by social learning theory would be relevant.

7.4.2 EVALUATION OF STRUCTURAL THEORY

Explanatory Breadth

Structural theory can explain six of the important phenomena previously identified. It can directly explain why male partner abuse runs in families (phenomenon 11). This is because all members of any family are born into the same structural conditions/systems of norms, and experience the same role models. Structural theory can also explain why all men do not abuse their partners (phenomenon 2). Non-abusing men are said to face fewer stress-inducing structural conditions, and violent role models which cause MAFP.

Structural theory can explain why domestically violent men report more positive attitudes towards the use of partner violence (phenomenon 6). This is because these individual attitudes reflect the pro-violent social norms that result from the violence-producing structural conditions that these men face. This theory can also account for the fact that domestically violent men do not report more conservative attitudes towards women generally (phenomenon 7), or more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), because the explanation does not theoretically incorporate general attitudes towards

women or gender schema. Finally, structural theory can directly explain fact that men direct this abuse primarily towards their female partners rather than those outside their family (phenomenon 9). The family as a social institution is said to create many frustrations and stresses which makes it a very violence prone institution.

Structural theory is unable to explain six of the important phenomena identified in the field. It cannot explain the prevalence of MAFP (phenomenon 1) and why husband battering (phenomenon 4) does not occur to any extent, for it can be reasonably argued that women face at least as many, if not more, stresses and frustrations within the family and generally in society, than do men, and that women have also similarly learned violence as a response to stress. Similarly, this theory cannot explain the comparatively socially normative nature of MAFP (phenomenon 3) for social norms are said to reflect the structural realities of a groups. Structural theory cannot explain the existence of the phenomenon of lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5). Although it could be argued that lesbians, because of structural heterosexism, face more violence inducing stress and frustration than heterosexual women, it needs to be kept in mind that the phenomenon of lesbian partner abuse does not involve mutual battering, but rather a definite perpetrator and a definite victim.

Structural theory cannot explain why MAFP generally occurs in private (phenomenon 10), because there is no obvious structural reason for this. It could possibly be argued that MAFP generally occurs in private because of the comparatively large amount of time that the family spends in private. Current clinical evidence, however, suggests that the abuse is often postponed until privacy is ensured, rather than just happens to occur in private. Similarly this theory cannot explain the correlation between alcohol use and male partner violence (phenomenon 12). Although alcohol could be considered to be a stressor, it is not one caused by structural conditions.

Practical Utility

Structural theory has initial practical utility because it is suggestive of both treatment and prevention interventions. However, the theory is particularly underdeveloped in relation to how the violent responses are learned and therefore unlearned.

7.5 EXCHANGE/SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY

The exchange/social control theory of family violence was largely developed from general exchange theory and to a lesser extent from general social control theory.

This theory was proposed by Gelles (1983) in an attempt to integrate the key elements of the diverse theories used to explain human violence.

7.5.1 EXPLICATION OF EXCHANGE/SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

Gelles (1983) attempts to explain child abuse and what he refers to as *spousal abuse*.

The Explanation

- An individual who supplies services to another, obliges them to fulfil an obligation, and thus the second individual must furnish benefits to the first. This concept is referred to as the principle of distributive justice.

- Outside of the family, when exchange is non-symmetrical, interactions will cease. However, within the family, relations cannot be so easily broken off.

- When family members perceive injustice in daily interactions (when the principle of distributive justice is violated), they may experience increased anger, resentment, and conflict.

- Persons engage in behaviour either to earn rewards or to escape costs or punishment. If there are rewards for violent behaviour and the costs do not outweigh these, violence will be used at times of anger, resentment and conflict.

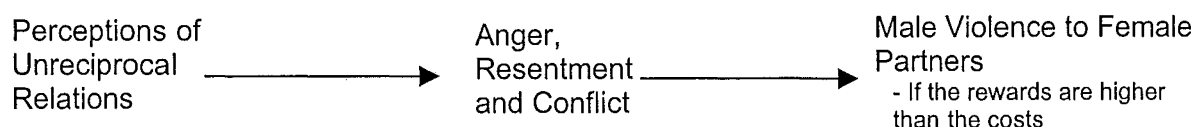
- The private nature of the family means that there is an absence of social controls to increase the costs of acts of violence. This encourages violence within the family.

- Power structures and consequent social norms within the family and society that promote male advantage and dictate male violence tactics, weaken social control and the costs of being violent for men. These power structures also influence *perceptions* of injustices, for example, decisions regarding who is entitled to more rewards for less investments, and also the determination of what is a valuable investment.

- Violence may also be used to inflict costs on one's partner. To injure someone, who is perceived to have not given equally in daily interactions, is rewarding. Revenge is a reward.

•Violence may also be used so men don't have to interact symmetrically: to get away with not acting symmetrically is rewarding.

Figure 12: The Exchange/Social Control Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The exchange/social control theory appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- (a) Aggression is part of human nature so humans will be aggressive if there is no social control to stop this.
- (b) Human motivation for aggression is consistent across all individuals, both male and female.
- (c) People naturally expect reciprocal human interactions within the family.
- (d) Anger and resentment are normal human responses when human interactions are not reciprocal.
- (e) The contemporary social order advocates non-violence.
- (f) Violence is abnormal behaviour.
- (g) Family violence is state behaviour; that is, it is behaviour that is used only in certain circumstances to achieve certain ends.

The Type of Explanation

This theory suggests that the proximal cause for male partner violence is the rewards that result from violence. The distal cause of the violence is the anger, resentment, and conflict generated by unreciprocal human relations.

Exchange/social control theory is a situational theory. It deals only with the antecedent conditions of violence, not how and why violence was chosen to deal with the lack of reciprocity (Gelles & Straus, 1979).

It is noted that Gelles (1983) summarizes this theory as, "people hit and abuse others because they can" (p. 157). The theory has, therefore, evolved to become a basic reinforcement theory. As this theory is only poorly developed it is not possible to clearly ascertain whether it promotes a realist or instrumentalist interpretation of these reinforcement principles. The broader theory, however, proposes that unreciprocal

human interactions directly generate anger, resentment and conflict, which is clearly suggestive of unobserved causal mechanisms. Exchange/social control theory will, therefore, be treated in this study as a realist explanation. It is noted, however, that this is a somewhat generous interpretation, and it could be quite easily argued that this is primarily an instrumentalist theory.

Applications

Gelles (1983) states that his exchange/social control theory is directly applicable to treatment issues. For, if people abuse family members because they can, then a central goal of treatment is to make it so that they cannot. Treatment goals, therefore, include increasing the degree of social control exerted over family relations and raising the cost of intrafamilial violence. This involves reducing the glorification and legitimization of violence and increasing the response capacity of the criminal justice system in cases of domestic abuse (Gelles, 1983). All of these measures would operate to increase social control and make violence less rewarding.

In terms of prevention, this theory would suggest eradicating the unequal power structure in the family which would increase social control and, therefore, the costs of violence for powerful members. This would also work to eradicate unrealistic perceptions such as that males are entitled to more rewards for less investments.

7.5.2 EVALUATION OF EXCHANGE/SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY

Explanatory Breadth

Exchange/social control theory can explain eight of the important phenomena identified in Chapter Three. It can explain the prevalence of MAFP (phenomenon 1) in terms of a simple auxiliary assumption; the prevalence of rewards and lack of costs in our society for male violence. It can also explain why individual men do not abuse (phenomenon 2). This is because they do not have nonreciprocal relations with their partner, or because they face many costs relative to benefits for their violence.

Exchange/social control theory can directly account for the socially normative nature of MAFP (phenomenon 3). Norms that dictate male violence tactics and legitimate male power in the family, are important factors that operate to minimize the costs of male partner violence. This theory also directly explains why husband battering does not occur to any extent (phenomenon 4). It suggests that because women are smaller, have less social status than men, and have a sex role that precludes the use of violence, they face greater costs for using violence, such as injury, and economic and

social sanctions (Gelles, 1983). This theory can account for the fact that domestically violent men do not report more conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), and why they do not report a more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8), because this theory does not consider these to be critical explanatory factors.

Exchange/social control theory can also explain why men direct this abuse primarily, if not exclusively, towards their female partners (phenomenon 9). This is because the rewards are higher for partner abuse than abuse towards others, and there is an absence of social controls in the family. Also, social norms differentially support family directed violence. For example, norms promote the view that people should not intervene in others' homes or break up families for the benefit of individual members (Gelles, 1983). Similarly, this theory can explain why this abuse is committed primarily in private (phenomenon 10). This is because within a family unreciprocal human relations cannot easily be broken off and this behaviour has comparatively fewer consequences or costs when it occurs in private.

Exchange/social control theory cannot explain four of the important phenomena outlined in Chapter Three. It cannot simultaneously explain the phenomenon of lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5) and the absence of husband battering, unless it is assumed that lesbians have a physical stature, violence-promoting sex roles and social status more similar to heterosexual males, than heterosexual females. This would, however, be a very controversial assumption. Exchange/social control theory cannot directly explain why abuse runs generationally in families (phenomenon 11), for it provides no explanatory mechanisms relating to family factors.

Exchange/social control theory cannot explain why domestically violent men do not report more positive attitudes towards partner violence (phenomenon 6), or the correlation between alcohol and partner violence (phenomenon 12), for the theory does not theoretically consider attitudes or alcohol as causes.

Practical Utility

Exchange/social control theory has initial practical utility because it is suggestive of both treatment and prevention interventions.

Conceptual Coherence

Social control theory, from which exchange/social control theory was developed, assumes that people are violent because they are not adequately bonded to a social order, which advocates peace and harmony within the family. However, within this current study it has been accepted that the evidence in fact suggests that the social

order advocates, rather than discourages, male abuse towards women partners.⁴⁷ The proponents of exchange/social control theory also acknowledge this point when they assert that social norms within the family promote male advantage and dictate male violence. In this respect, exchange/social control theory contains a major contradiction in simultaneously asserting that the social order encourages, and discourages, male abuse. It is noted that the high explanatory breadth of the theory was in part a result of the theory incorporating both of these positions.

7.6 RESOURCE THEORY⁴⁸

One of the central concepts in sociology has traditionally been the concept of power. Power can be viewed as the potential ability of one person to get their own way or advance their own interests. Resource theory equates power with the possession of resources, and is associated in the field of MAFP primarily with Blood and Wolfe (1960), Goode (1971), and Rodman (1972).

7.6.1 EXPLICATION OF RESOURCE THEORY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

Resource theory is usually invoked to attempt to explain physical violence or overt force, although Goode (1971) includes covert violence or the threat of force, but does not include general psychological violence.

Resource theory usually focuses specifically on men's violence towards female partners, in particular the violence of men who have few resources; that is, working class men's violence. Some resource theorists also attempt to explain the violence of other family members. For example, Allen and Straus (1980) consider women's violence and Gelles (1993a) consider children's violence towards parents.

The Explanation

- The family, like all social systems, is a power system.

⁴⁷See Chapter Three, p. 28.

⁴⁸Resource theory is a specific instance of exchange theory. Rodman (1972) in contrasting resource theory and exchange theory, argues that resources can be identified as the commodities that are exchanged, while exchange can refer to the process by which these resources are exchanged. Whereas resource theory identifies the main problem to be male abuse of authority, feminist theories regard men's authority to be problematic in itself, not just their abuse of their authority.

- The more resources a family member can command, the more power they have; that is, the more they can advance their own interests.

- Various resources can affect a family member's power position, including: skills, earnings, accomplishments, intelligence, educational achievement, position outside the family, likability, and force (physical violence) and its threat. *Being male* is also an important resource.⁴⁹

- Socialisation trains people to believe in the justness of the family power system and the use of resources, including violence, to advance one's interests within the family. Socialisation also operates to define valued resources. For example, being female and providing family nurturing are not defined as valued resources, whereas being male and having an education are.

- An individual will attempt to obtain what they want at a minimum cost. They will, therefore, firstly invoke minimum cost resources, such as being male or educational achievement. If these resources are not available, they will then invoke more costly resources to achieve a goal, such as violence.

- Physical force is, therefore, the ultimate resource invoked by men to ensure they get what they want, when they believe they are legitimately entitled to get what they want, and when they cannot get this through the possession of other lower cost resources.

- In contemporary societies, women are now gaining equality with men in terms of resource ownership, and equalitarian norms are now replacing patriarchal norms. However, certain segments of society, for example, the working classes, lag behind others in this normative transition. Working class men, therefore, have comparatively less resource advantage over women, but still have a strong belief in their right to power, and they are, therefore, more likely to utilize violence (Allen & Straus, 1980).

Figure 13: The Resource Explanation



⁴⁹Although Goode (1971) emphasises that *being male* is a resource, not all resource theorists follow this.

The Deconstructed Explanation

Resource theory appears to presuppose the following assumptions:

- (a) Male violence is instrumental violence.
- (b) Male partner violence is normal behaviour.
- (c) Power relationships are a normal and natural aspect of family life.
- (d) Domestic abuse offenders are different from other men only in terms of their lack of non-violent resources.
- (e) Males and females do not differ in terms of mechanisms or behaviours relating to violence.
- (f) Male partner violence is a state behaviour.
- (g) Human beings equate resources with power.
- (h) In contemporary societies there is a move towards male/female equality in terms of resource ownership.
- (i) In contemporary societies, norm changes lag behind structural changes.

The Type of Explanation

The proximal explanation for the male partner violence is the lack of non-violent resources to legitimate male domination. The distal explanation is the social norms and ideology that define male domination within the family and valued resources.

Often in the literature, resource theory focuses on relating observed, or reported violence, in relation to a tally of the possessed resources. It could, therefore, be argued that resource theory is essentially an instrumentalist explanation. The resource explanation, however, also focuses on power relations and the underlying social ideology, as unobserved causal mechanisms. It can, therefore, be reasonably interpreted as a realist explanation.

Applications

There is little in the literature in terms of the practical application of resource theory. O'Brien (1971) argues, however, that resource theory suggests that enactment of public policy designed to support the resource status of husbands, by increasing their achievement and earning ability, would be likely to result in a reduction in family violence.

7.6.2 EVALUATION OF RESOURCE THEORY

Explanatory Breadth

Resource theory can explain six of the important phenomena identified in the field. It can directly explain the prevalence of male partner violence (phenomenon 1). The theory suggests that recent changes towards equality for women have resulted in a weakening of the effectiveness of the being male resource, and as a result men have had to resort more often to invoking the violence resource to maintain or legitimate their dominance. Men who do not abuse their partners (phenomenon 2) are explained because these men are said to possess sufficient resources so that they do not need to resort to the use of high cost resources, such as violence, to get what they want. It is noted, however, that this theory cannot explain the important fact that many middle-class men, who do possess many low-cost resources, still resort to using instrumental violence.

Resource theory can explain why MAFP runs in families (phenomenon 11). The lack of low-cost resources that would help men maintain their balance of exchange without resorting to violence, could reasonably be argued to run in families. Resource theory can also directly explain the socially normative nature of male partner violence (phenomenon 3), because it directly suggests that all people are socialized into believing that men are entitled to uphold their privileged position, by whatever means necessary. Resource theory can explain why domestically violent males do not report more conservative attitudes towards women (phenomenon 7), or more masculine gender schema (phenomenon 8). This theory would not expect domestically abusive men to have more conservative attitudes towards women, or more masculine gender orientations, because it does not suggest that either of these are casually related to the problem.

Resource theory, however, cannot explain six of the important phenomena in the field. It cannot directly explain why domestically violent men report more positive attitudes towards the use of partner violence (phenomenon 6). This theory would expect that all men, even those who do not use violence as a resource, would equally accept the use of violence if necessary. It is not attitudes to violence that this theory suggests cause violence, but the lack of alternative less costly resources to justify power.

Resource theory cannot explain why the phenomenon of husband battering does not exist to any extent (phenomenon 4). Allen and Straus (1980) suggest that resource theory similarly applies to both men and women and that "the greater the wife's

resources the less her use of violence" (p. 203). The absence of husband battering could, therefore, only be explained in terms of women comparatively possessing other less costly alternative resources. However, this auxiliary assumption would be problematic, because women as a group clearly possess fewer resources, such as wealth, education, money and of course the being male resource, than men do. Similarly this theory cannot adequately explain the phenomenon of lesbian partner abuse (phenomenon 5) in the face of an absence of husband battering.

Resource theory cannot explain, in terms of resources, why men with low resources predominantly direct their abuse towards their female partners (phenomenon 9) rather than say their bosses, or why this partner violence primarily occurs in private (phenomenon 10). Furthermore, resource theory cannot explain the correlation between alcohol and male partner violence (phenomenon 12), because the theory makes no theoretical mention of alcohol.

Practical Utility

There is little suggested in the literature in terms of the resource theory's role in offering treatment and preventions and it, therefore, has limited practical utility. The only intervention explicitly suggested is O'Brien's (1971) intervention, designed to support the resource status of husbands by increasing their achievement and earning ability. As O'Brien (1971) himself acknowledges, this intervention is "likely to be viewed by those in support of the Women's Liberation movement as a blatant reinforcement of male supremacy" (p. 697). Furthermore, as Walker (1990) argues, this theoretical approach is inherently conservative, because the identified problem and intervention focus is on men's abuse of authority; that is, violence to uphold authority, rather than their privileged position in the first place.

7.7 GELLES & STRAUS' INTEGRATED THEORY

In 1979 Gelles and Straus presented the first comprehensive integrated theory of family violence to appear in the literature. The integrated theory incorporated thirteen theories of family violence, which were considered to provide distinctive, but complementary accounts of family violence. The integrated theory was primarily presented in the form of an extensive *theoretical diagram* which used causal arrows to link elements from each of the thirteen theories, with elements of one or more of the other theories.

In addition to the theoretical diagram it was stated that all the theories in the integration drew on, or were dependent on, four common explanatory principles. These were; the processes of social learning, the tendency to respond to frustrating or stressful structural arrangements with aggression, the ubiquity of change in social relationships, and the processes whereby common social behaviours are standardised into social norms and values. However, as Gelles (1983) himself later concluded, the final integrated theory, in the form of the theoretical diagram, was of limited value, as it was too long and complex to examine. An additional limitation of this integrated theory was that it involved theoretical eclecticism or the merging of complementary theoretical positions without any discrimination. This method of theory integration risks creating large integrated theories with redundant parts; that is, theories which provide explanatory details over and above what is required to economically explain the phenomena in the field.

Although Gelles and Straus' integrated theory is the only comprehensive attempt at theory integration to appear in the family violence literature to date, it will not be further considered in this study. Although it suggests some of the possible key linkages between the various individual theories in the field, as well as some of the common explanatory principles, it does not provide any explicit and coherent explanatory details to allow a constructive evaluation of the theory.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A NEW FEMINIST INTEGRATED THEORY

This chapter will present a new integrated theory of MAFP developed from some of the individual theories that have been shown in this study to have the greatest value; that is, the greatest explanatory breadth, practical utility and conceptual coherence. This chapter will follow the format of the previous four chapters. The new integrated theory of MAFP will be presented and deconstructed, its application will be considered, and it will then be fully evaluated with regard to its explanatory breadth, practical utility and conceptual coherence.

The new integrated theory presented here has been developed primarily from feminist theory, as this theory was shown to have considerable explanatory power and practical utility. The new integrated theory has developed basic feminist theory, by moving from an exclusive focus on patriarchy and gender, to a broader focus on hierarchy. This shift has improved the explanatory breadth of the original feminist explanation. The new theory presented here also improves on the conceptual coherence of general feminist theory by providing explicit details regarding the relationship between the constraints of patriarchy and individual men's choice.

A number of other theories considered in this study were also evaluated highly. These include evolutionary psychology, social learning theory, the borderline personality theory, exchange/social control theory, and the subcultural theory. Although the new theory presented here has primarily evolved from feminist theory, it will also integrate aspects of these other highly evaluated explanations, where they complement and extend the explanatory breadth of the feminist theory.

The explanation of MAFP put forward by evolutionary psychology is itself an integrated explanation. One of the major strengths of this theoretical perspective is that it provides a coherent explanation, rather than just the merging of a number of unrelated explanatory principles. The explanation is coherent in that the influence of evolutionary processes is incorporated into every component of the explanation. Similarly, the new integrated theory presented here will provide an explanation that is generally coherent. In this case the core of the explanation will centre on cultural influences rather than genetic fitness, although the new theory will acknowledge evolutionary processes.

The new theory presented in this chapter is also heavily influenced by social learning theory, a theory which provides many of the important more proximal explanatory details about how behaviours are socially learned and maintained, through modelling, instruction and/or reinforcement. Both social learning theory and exchange/social control theory emphasize how violence, or in this case abuse, will occur if the rewards are higher than the costs. Furthermore, social learning theory acknowledges self rewards and punishments, which is an important explanatory principle that will be incorporated into the current integrated theory.

The borderline personality organisation theory has also had an important influence on the distal and proximal explanations provided by the integrated theory presented here. This theory emphasizes the importance of the parenting role in the development of the psychological mechanisms that underlie MAFP. The borderline personality organisation theory specifically integrates explanatory principles from attachment theory, as does the new theory presented here, although the two theories suggest different mechanisms by which frustrated attachment results in intimate abusiveness. It is noted that the new explanation provided in this chapter differs from both social learning theory and the borderline personality organisation theory, in that it suggests that the family environment, which creates the abusing person, directly channels the dominant culture. The subculture of violence explanation has also influenced the current integrated theory, as the new theory acknowledges that various cultures exist alongside one another.

Finally, the biological explanation put forward by Perry and others (1995) has been an important influence on the current integrated theory. This theory suggests that the brain organizes in a use-dependent fashion, and that early traumatic events can, therefore, cause changes in the structure and function of the brain that contribute to later behaviour. Biological and feminist theories of MAFP are usually considered to be antithetical because they generally indicate different conceptions of the role of social factors and responsibility. These two theoretical positions are, however, potentially complementary, particularly if it is accepted that living in a patriarchal society causes changes to men's brains that impacts on how they relate to their women partners.

The integrated theory presented here uses as a framework, both the ecological perspective and Ward and Hudson's (1998) proximal/distal distinction outlined earlier. In keeping with the ecological perspective, it organizes the postulated causal mechanisms of MAFP into a nested arrangement. In keeping with Ward and Hudson's (1998) proximal/distal framework, it simultaneously organizes the postulated causal mechanisms into those which are proximal and distal in nature. In recognition of its origins, this new theory will be referred to as the new feminist integrated theory.

8.1 EXPLICATION OF THE NEW FEMINIST INTEGRATED THEORY

The Behaviour/Phenomena to be Explained

This new feminist integrated theory will explain patterns of abusive behaviour, rather than individual acts of violence, as this has been identified as the core of the problem of MAFP throughout this study. Following Card (1995) and Hart (1986), the problem will, therefore, be specifically defined as patterns of violent and coercive behaviours, whereby one person seeks to dominate another's thoughts, beliefs or conduct, or to punish the person for resisting their control over them. The problem will not be identified as individual acts of physical or psychological violence, unless these occur within a systematic pattern of control.

This new theory will explain men's abuse of women partners. It will not attempt to explain women's abuse of their male partners, for as has been previously shown, there is no empirical warrant to suggest that this latter problem exists to any extent (Dobash & Dobash, 1988). In addition, this theory will also be presented as an explanation for lesbian partner abuse, child abuse and elder abuse perpetrated by an adult child. In keeping with previous chapters, however, this chapter will primarily focus on explaining MAFP, although the explanation will be extended to explain these other forms of family abuse in the section on explanatory breadth.

The Explanation

- The dominant system of social organisation and ideology in all contemporary and historical societies is *hierarchy*. Hierarchy is a key explanatory construct in MAFP.

- Hierarchy can be understood as a form of social organisation and ideology that reflects, creates, and maintains, social arrangements of domination and subordination. It can be conceived of as comprising two elements, which are structure and ideology. The structure is the hierarchical organisation of social institutions and social relations. The ideology comprises the values, beliefs, and norms, regarding the naturalness, legitimacy and justness of hierarchical relationships, and the inherent right or entitlement of those in higher positions in the hierarchy to dominate, control, and perpetrate any acts which they see fit, on those below themselves in the hierarchy.

- The ideology of hierarchy is expressed in various forms. Patriarchy is one pervasive and institutionalized expression of hierarchy, based on gender.

- Other forms of hierarchy are based on factors such as age, ethnic group, religious group, heterosexist privilege, social status, personal power, and/or physical strength.

- Within a heterosexual partnership, the patriarchal hierarchy will likely be dominant over other hierarchies in shaping interactions, because of the pervasiveness of the patriarchal hierarchy. In heterosexual partnerships men will, therefore, assume entitlement of power. In non-heterosexual partnerships, various non-patriarchal hierarchies will constrain and direct interactions.

- Hierarchy is transformed into individual beliefs and behaviours through the process of socialisation. This occurs by way of direct instruction, operant learning, and, modelling. Individuals, therefore, come to believe in the naturalness, rightfulness and justness of hierarchy, as well as the naturalness, rightfulness and justness of the tactics of any person who is in a dominant position.

- Hierarchical beliefs directly cause individual's abusive behaviours.

- The ideology of hierarchy incorporates various normative justifications. For example, that alcohol consumption, anger, stress, or violation of rights, justifiably result in acts of domination and control, *for those at the top of the hierarchy*. These normative justifications effectively operate as a cause of MAFP, because of the effect of cultural expectancy.

- The primary socializers of children are: (i) parents and/or other significant intimate adults, and (ii) institutions such as schools, the media, churches, and sporting organisations that have direct contact with the developing child. Both directly channel the hierarchical culture to the developing child.

- Socialisation into unmoderated hierarchy, which involves direct instruction, and direct and vicarious experience, of the controlling and dominating tactics of hierarchy, effectively constitutes child maltreatment.⁵⁰

- Socialisation into hierarchy by parents/intimate others, in addition to contributing to beliefs regarding the naturalness of hierarchy and the tactics of hierarchs, also directly impacts on attachment processes (attachment to a significant intimate person, which is often, but not necessarily, a parent or an adult).

⁵⁰This is not to deny that effective parent-child relations obviously require that parents will at times need to take control of some aspects of their child's life. For example, a child cannot make reasonable decisions about appropriate bedtimes or meals. However, where parental control over these areas involves fair and consistent limits or restrictions, and occurs in the child's best interests, rather than to merely control or dominate, this does not constitute abuse.

•Successful attachment requires a child to feel cared for, safe, loved, valued, and a member of a network of mutual obligations (Pocock, 1994). Successful attachment requires an adult to be trustworthy, protective of the child, sensitive and responsive to the child's physical and emotional needs, to be emotionally available, encouraging, sincere, stable and consistent, and to not be controlling or fear provoking (Bowlby, 1973). Clearly, therefore, successful attachment, by definition, cannot occur within the context of unmoderated hierarchical adult-child relations. In addition, if a child's mother is being abused by her partner, her victimisation will directly effect her ability to be an effective, responsive and available caregiver and, therefore, her ability to develop a secure attached relationship with her child (Pocock, 1994).⁵¹

•Disruption to attachment impacts on a child's later ability to *empathize*. A person's ability to empathize relates to their cognitive/emotive ability to be aware of, *and* to value, others emotional well-being and, therefore, also their ability to value and seek non-hierarchical intimate relationships.⁵² Where a developing child's ability to empathize is damaged, there will be less concern for the emotional well-being of others.

•As a result of the damage to the empathy mechanism, there is less motivation to stop abusing or to pursue other courses of action, for the ability to empathize, operates to self-punish hierarchical behaviours/ acts of maltreatment and hierarchical beliefs.

•Hierarchical behaviours are also maintained because of external consequences of the behaviour. Controlling others is rewarding because it achieves goals, alleviates aversive stimuli and has relatively low and inconsistent costs, for example, within the family it has relatively minor social disapproval and few legal consequences. However, the internal consequences of the behaviour (self-punishment, because of the ability to empathize), is a critical factor in maintaining *systematic and continued abuse*.

•Men's hierarchical beliefs are maintained and strengthen by successful acts of MAFP.

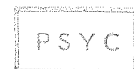
•Alongside the dominant culture various marginal, *non-hierarchical* subcultures exist which reflect, create and maintain social relationships based on *equality*. These non-hierarchical cultures are antithetical or contradictory to hierarchical culture.

⁵¹It is noted here that it has been well documented that children will still attach even to adults who have severely abused them. This process can best be referred to as *bonding*, to distinguish it from *successful attachment*, which involves trust and safety. It is also noted that *successful attachment* is a matter of degree, with totally successful attachment at one end and failed attachment at the other end.

⁵²It needs to be emphasised that empathy, as it is understood here, includes *the valuing of other's feelings and needs*, not only an awareness of other's emotions. This point needs to be made because it is often noted, that for some domestic abuse offenders, the suffering of their victims is rewarding, and for this to be rewarding these men must be aware of their partner's suffering.

•If a child's parent figures/significant intimate others are influenced by, and therefore channel, these non-hierarchical cultures, this will moderate the influence of the dominant hierarchical culture on the developing child. Children will still be socialized into the hierarchical ideology to some extent, because of the dominance of this culture. For example, they will still know the roles to take when they are in a dominant or subordinate position, they will accept without question, to a greater or lesser degree, their own or other's privilege, and they will at some time have controlled or dominated others who are subordinate to them.⁵³ However, because these children have experienced intimate caregiving that is moderated by non-hierarchical ideologies, they will have experienced a greater opportunity for attachment, and their ability to empathize will be more intact.⁵⁴ As a result, abuse will be less likely to become a consistent and systematic pattern of behaviour, for the ability to empathize will operate to self-punish abusive behaviours and abuse promoting beliefs.

•As a result of socialisation into hierarchy the propensity to abuse comes to reside within individuals. Within hierarchical culture, because of the dominance and pervasiveness of the culture, every person comes to have the predisposition, to a greater or lesser degree, to perpetrate *abusive acts*.⁵⁵ This is because everyone comes to incorporate, to some extent, the hierarchical beliefs that underlie abusive behaviours, and everyone also experiences the widespread external reinforcements for abusive behaviours towards subordinates in hierarchical cultures. Some people, however, will also have experienced an unmoderated hierarchical influence, via hierarchical (and maltreating) intimate caretaking, and will consequently have experienced damage to their ability to empathize. These people will, therefore, have less ability to self-punish acts of abuse, and they will as a result have a predisposition to abuse in a *long-term and systematic way*.⁵⁶



•Violent acts are just one of the many tactics of control. Violent acts are not fundamentally different in nature from other tactics of control such as humiliation, intimidation, physical confinement, or sexual violation.

⁵³That is, the children who have experience non-hierarchical influences in their upbringing, will have perpetrated *abusive acts* rather than a systematic pattern of abuse. It is noted that these *abusive acts* differ from the aforementioned *violent acts* which could not be considered as abuse, because they were committed in a context of self-defence or retaliation. *Abusive acts* in contrast involve control and domination, but are not systematic and continual like *abuse*.

⁵⁴A formerly abused child in Zirman's (1986) study, who appeared to have survived the trauma of her/his abuse, succinctly expressed the beneficial effects of having a positive adult in their life. The child reported that "He made me believe there were other people" (p. 346).

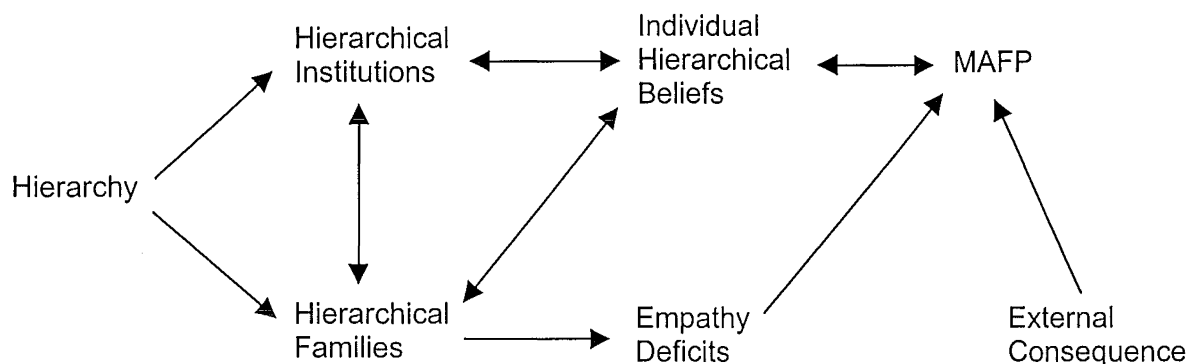
⁵⁵It will be recalled that *abusive acts* are distinguished from *systematic patterns of abuse*. See footnote 49 above.

⁵⁶As with *successful attachment*, *empathy* is also best regarded on a continuum, with the capacity to fully empathize at one end, and the total absence of the ability to empathize at the other end.

•Damage to the empathy mechanism, and the consequent propensity to abuse in a long-term and systematic way, may also originate from other causes, for example, biological causes like genetics or head injury.

•Hierarchy and the empathetic mechanism are postulated as *key* explanatory mechanisms in MAFP. There will, however, be other causal pathways to MAFP which this theory does not directly address. As a result, some men will abuse in a long-term and systematic way, and will not exhibit deficits in their ability to empathize.

Figure 14: The New Feminist Integrated Explanation



The Deconstructed Explanation

The new feminist integrated theory presupposes the following assumptions:

- (a) All human beings are born with the propensity to develop or learn both abusive and non-abusive ways of relating.
- (b) Domination and domination tactics are learned behaviours.
- (c) MAFP is a problem that originates from sociocultural origins and transforms into both a family and an individual problem.
- (d) Hierarchy exists: contemporary social arrangements and ideology are largely based on hierarchical relationships. Some marginal non-hierarchical systems of social organisation exist.
- (e) MAFP is not an abnormal or deviant phenomenon resulting from the breakdown of family functioning or individual pathology. MAFP is not committed by madman, who are unlike other people, but results from normal psychological and behavioural patterns dictated by the dominant hierarchical ideology. MAFP is a predictable, integral and normal dimension of family life in a hierarchical society.
- (f) Men who abuse their partners in a systematic and continued way have the same hierarchical belief systems, but not the same ability to empathise, as men who do not abuse in this way.
- (g) Hierarchical ideology determines or influences individual beliefs.
- (h) People's belief systems are largely unconscious and unreportable.

- (i) People's beliefs cause their behaviours.
- (j) Human beings are universally born with a rudimentary psychological mechanism which gives them the capacity to empathize. This mechanism is developed in a use-dependent fashion, during the process of early intimate relationships.
- (k) The empathy mechanism results from the process of natural selection, although because of the possibility of exaptation, it cannot be definitively stated for what purpose it was originally designed.⁵⁷
- (l) Males and females are not born with any significant differences in the rudimentary empathy mechanism.
- (m) MAFP results from male traits or relatively permanent, stable mechanisms.
- (n) MAFP is purposeful, intentional, instrumental, coercive behaviour.
- (o) MAFP does not involve loss of control. The notion of *loss of control* is fostered by a focus on acts of physical violence. If the problem is understood as abuse, where the behaviour more clearly involves premeditation,⁵⁸ then the concept of *loss of control* is a less plausible and accurate assumption.
- (p) MAFP does not involve intent or true choice. Fiske (1989) suggests that intent can be inferred when a person chooses one cognitive course of action (in this case, the acceptance of hierarchical beliefs and behaviours), when others (in this case, the acceptance of non-hierarchical beliefs and behaviours) are potentially available; that is, a man's intent could be inferred if the existence of non-hierarchical ideologies was acknowledged when the man thought about it (Johnston & Ward, 1996). If those men who abuse do not have the empathetic response capacity then they do not exhibit intent or true choice. This is because the choice to accept non-hierarchical ideologies and to not continue to abuse (because of concern for the well-being for others, not because of threat of external consequences) is not potentially available. Experiencing non-hierarchical parenting/caretaking, which moderates the pervasive effect of hierarchy, in effect provides the potential for future choice.

The Type of Explanation

This new theory is an integrated theory that has used Ward & Hudson's (1998) proximal/distal distinction and the ecological perspective, as frameworks, within which to organize the theory. It posits that the distal causes of MAFP are the dominant hierarchical culture, the hierarchical nature of intimate childhood socialisation agents, the hierarchical belief systems of individuals and empathy deficits. The proximal causal

⁵⁷It would be intuitively appealing, however, to suggest that the empathy mechanism evolved, because of it contributed to genetic fitness, by way of the advantages associated with social interdependence.

⁵⁸For example, when the abuser waits until the couple gets home before punishing his partner in relation to an incident that occurred when they were out, or when a man stalks his partner or tracks her down, with the aim of intimidating or abusing her in some other way.

factors are the absence of self-punishment, and the absence of social costs and abundance of social rewards for abuse by hierarchs. Furthermore, this theory suggests that a nested relationship exists between these various causal factors. The hierarchical social system is said to create the hierarchical institutions, including the family, which in turn directly creates the individuals who perpetrate abuse. Furthermore, this theory clearly identifies the causal mechanisms responsible for the nesting of these factors.

This theory is a realist theory as it posits hierarchy, individual's hierarchical belief systems, and empathy deficits, as underlying and unobserved causal mechanisms. It is a rudimentary theory that is clearly in need of further development, particularly in relation to the postulated empathy mechanism.

Applications

This theory suggests that MAFP involves two distinct problems and, therefore, two types of offenders. It identifies the *systematic and continued abuse* perpetrated by men who have deficits in their empathy mechanism, and the less systematic, *acts of abuse*, which will be perpetrated by men who have been socialized into the hierarchical ideology, but who do not possess deficits in their empathy mechanism.

In relation to the first type of offender, this theory would suggest treatment that aimed at developing the empathy response, so that men could self-punish their own abusive behaviour, which would reduce their future offending. This treatment would aim to give men the capacity to choose not to be abusive. An additional treatment intervention for these systematic offenders would involve reducing the opportunity for the men to abuse. The domestically abusive man, once identified, could be removed from the risky situation, which in this case would be close proximity to a person subordinate to himself, until it was ensured that his abusive behaviour would not continue. Although this may be considered to be an unrealistic option, it would be preferable to the common current intervention, which is to expect the victim (and possibly her children) to remove themselves from the situation. If future research were to conclude that damage to the empathy mechanism is in fact irreversible, this finding would increase the importance of this option.

Finally, in relation to both types of offenders, this theory would suggest that treatment could involve social control in the form of establishing immediate and consistent social and legal consequences for the abuse. In regards to the long-term, systematic offenders, this intervention would aim to effectively override the absence of any self-punishment in those men with empathy deficits.

In terms of prevention, this theory would clearly suggest changes to the hierarchical structure which underlies this abuse. Furthermore, it would suggest that intervening with the children in homes where abuse (or unmoderated hierarchical socialisation) occurs, may constitute the best form of primary prevention of all types of family abuse that we have to date.

8.2 EVALUATION OF THE NEW FEMINIST INTEGRATED THEORY

Explanatory Breadth

The new feminist integrated theory can relatively simply explain all twelve of the important phenomena identified in Chapter Three. In addition, the new feminist integrated theory can also explain a number of other important phenomena in the field that will be identified in the latter part of this section. The ability to explain these additional phenomena increases the explanatory breadth of the new feminist integrated theory.

It needs to be reemphasized at this point that the present theory is explaining patterns of control and domination, whereas a number of the phenomena identified in this area relate specifically to physically violent acts. However, as argued earlier in this study, because of the pervasiveness and dominance of the patriarchal system of social stratification, any act of physical violence perpetrated by a male towards a female, is likely to involve control and domination. Within the following appraisal of explanatory breadth, men's physical violence towards their female partners will, therefore, be considered as an indicator of abuse, although this will be identified as an auxiliary assumption in each case.

Phenomenon 1: Male violence towards female partners is widespread

The new feminist integrated theory of MAFP can simply account for this phenomenon with the utilisation of the auxiliary assumption that violent acts are a reasonable indicator of abuse. Male violence as one of the basic tactics of abuse, is widespread because the patriarchal hierarchy is so dominant and pervasive.

Phenomenon 2: A reasonable proportion of men do not abuse their female partners

This fact can be explained simply by this theory. Not all men abuse for two main reasons. Some men will not abuse because their intimate childhood socialisation history moderated the influence of the dominant hierarchical culture and, therefore, their ability to empathize remained intact. As a result, these men self-punish any of their own abusive acts and, therefore, do not abuse in a systematic, long-term way. Other men may not abuse even though they have been socialized into hierarchy by both the

greater culture, and by their parent/parent figures, and will consequently have both hierarchical belief systems and an inability to empathize. This group will not abuse because either they have no opportunity; that is, no subordinate person is intimately available, or because the costs of abusing (for them directly, not in terms of costs relating to self-punishment for emotional harm to others) is too high in relation to the benefits.

Phenomenon 3: Male violence towards a female partner is comparatively socially accepted and socially normative

If male violence is accepted as just one male tactic of control this theory can simply account for this phenomenon. As a major component of a patriarchal hierarchy would be the ideology relating to the normalness and justness of male domination and control. Therefore, the social acceptance of male tactics of control would be expected.

Phenomenon 4: The absence of husband battering

This theory can simply explain the fact that men rather than women are the main perpetrators of abuse within heterosexual partnerships. The patriarchal or gender hierarchy is a predominant and pervasive expression of hierarchy. Within this hierarchical system, men are clearly given the position of hierarch over women. The patriarchal hierarchy instils men with the belief in their superiority and entitlement with regard to women and their right to control their women partners by whatever means. Women are not instilled with this belief in relation to males. Therefore, even if they have damage to their empathy mechanism, they will not direct abuse towards males.

Phenomenon 5: The existence of lesbian partner abuse

This theory can simply explain lesbian partner abuse. Within lesbian partnerships, the institutionalized hierarchy based upon patriarchy, does not directly constrain or direct interactions, because no male-female relationship exists. However, because of the dominant hierarchical culture, lesbians in relationships will be constrained by other hierarchies based upon other factors. If systematic abuse occurs, it will be perpetrated by the lesbian higher in the hierarchy, if she has experienced the unmoderated effects of a hierarchical upbringing, and has the consequent deficits in her ability to empathize.

A tentative empirical finding that is emerging in the field of lesbian partner abuse is that women who are the victims of abuse in one lesbian relationship do not commonly later become a perpetrator of abuse in future same-sex relationships (Elliot, 1996). This finding can simply be accounted for by the current theory, as it suggests that the predisposition to abuse comes to reside in an individual, rather than being transitory and solely the result of the constraints of social hierarchies.

Phenomenon 6: Domestically violent men report more positive attitudes towards the use of partner violence than non-violent men

This phenomenon could be relatively simply explained by this new feminist integrated theory. The theory suggests that the patriarchal hierarchy instils in men the belief in their inherent right to control or dominate intimate women, by whatever means. All men would, therefore, to some extent incorporate a relatively positive attitude to partner violence as a tactic of control. Those men that consistently abuse their partners, however, differ from non-abusing men in terms of empathy deficits and the consequent deficiencies in self-punishment. Self-punishment would also operate to moderate the beliefs held regarding entitlement of control and its tactics.

If this new feminist integrated theory could not provide an explanation of this phenomenon, it would not, however, diminish the explanatory breadth of the explanation, for the theory suggests that the attitudes are largely unconscious and unreportable.

Phenomenon 7: Domestically violent men do not report more conservative attitudes towards women than non-violent men

The new feminist integrated theory can account for this phenomenon, for it suggests that the individual belief systems which originate from the ideology of patriarchy, are largely unconscious and unreportable.

Phenomenon 8: Domestically violent men do not report a more masculine gender schema than non-violent men

As for phenomenon 7, the new feminist integrated theory can explain this phenomenon for it clearly suggests that individual belief systems are largely unconscious and unreportable.

Phenomenon 9: Domestic abuse offenders direct their abuse predominantly towards their female partners

The new feminist integrated theory can explain why this abuse is directed predominantly towards female partners rather than, for example, towards bosses or others in the community. Patriarchal ideology directs male abuse towards those who are subordinate and within the family there is ample opportunity for men to abuse, as they have free access to a suitable victim, in the form of a subordinate person. Furthermore, a systematic pattern of abuse, which may include tactics such as confinement, social isolation, beatings, humiliation, and/or total control of time and space, in comparison to an isolated act of violence, requires a length of involvement, an intensity of involvement, and a situation where relations cannot be easily or immediately

terminated. The female partner, and other subordinate family members, are, therefore, the ideal victims.⁵⁹

Phenomenon 10: Domestic abuse offenders generally direct their abuse towards their female partners in private

The new feminist integrated theory could be said to account for this phenomenon if the assumption that this phenomenon was an indication that men have control over their behaviour was accepted. Alternatively, it could also be argued that the new feminist integrated theory cannot adequately explain this phenomenon, if the phenomenon is understood to indicate that men control their behaviour in public, because they believe it to be generally socially unacceptable. Within a patriarchal hierarchy, the ideology is of course said to endorse and uphold male control and control tactics, rather than discourage them, and men would therefore not be expected to feel the need to hide their behaviour from social view.

Although MAFP is *comparatively* normatively condoned and accepted, it is not, however, *absolutely* condoned, for there exist other marginal non-hierarchical cultures alongside the dominant hierarchical culture. Domestic abuse offenders will be aware of the existence of these other cultures,⁶⁰ and that if they abuse their partners in public situations, that they may face some interference from others who are affected by non-hierarchical ideologies. Research into the differential rates of abuse within different contexts would clearly be useful to build on this explanation.

Phenomenon 11: The generational repetition of abuse

This theory can clearly explain the generational repetition of abuse within families. Upbringing within an unmoderated hierarchical environment, would result in damage to the ability to empathize and, therefore, the likely occurrence of abuse to subordinates within the next generation.

Phenomenon 12: The association between men's alcohol use and their violence towards their female partners

This theory suggests that the ideology of hierarchy incorporates various normative justifications, including the notion that alcohol consumption reasonably results in domination and control for those in dominant positions in the hierarchy. In

⁵⁹It will be recalled that in the introduction of this study, it was noted that a particularly promising explanation of why women stay in abusive relations had been put forward in the Stockholm syndrome theory (Graham et al., 1988) and the coercive control theory (Okun, 1986). These theories consider an abused women's situation to be similar to that of the person who is brainwashed and tortured, who is interned in a concentration camp or who succumbs to an authoritarian religious cult. This explanation of why women stay clearly illustrates how the nature of abuse being considered here, requires an environment or context which the family readily supplies.

⁶⁰Domestic abuse offenders will be *aware* of these other cultures but this does not mean that they *believe* in them.

other words, whatever tactics a male hierarch chooses to utilize, the ideology will justify, minimize and normalize this, by way of a variety of methods, including claiming alcohol intoxication. These normative justification also effectively come to operate as causes for MAFP because of the effect of cultural expectancy.

The current theory would suggest that these normative justification would not operate to the same extent for those in a subordinate position in the hierarch. That is, a subordinate person, in this case a women, who perpetrated a violent act towards a person dominant to them, in this case a man, would not be excused on the ground that they were intoxicated. Similarly, cultural expectancy also would not operate with respect to a person who is subordinate in the hierarchy.

Phenomenon 13: Maori overrepresentation as perpetrators of MAFP

Various statistics indicate that Maori men are over represented as perpetrators of MAFP (Balzer et al., 1997; National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges, 1997). It is likely that various factors may in fact inflate the figures relating to rates of Maori perpetrated MAFP, such as the criminal justice system's probable biases for arresting and processing Maori domestic abuse offenders, and the difficulties inherent in defining who is Maori. However, it is generally accepted by researchers in New Zealand, that at this point in time, Maori men are over-represented as perpetrators of MAFP (Balzer et al., 1997; National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges, 1997).

To explain this phenomenon Balzer et al. (1997) argue that within Maori culture, as a result of colonisation and neocolonisation, the traditional values, beliefs, and ideologies that were antithetical to the now dominant patriarchal ideology, have disintegrated. Simultaneously, as colonized people, Maori have also lost their ability to provide their own sanctions against perpetrators of MAFP. As a result, Maori men in New Zealand are faced with fewer moderating influences on the dominant patriarchal hierarchical culture, whereas Pakeha men have the opportunity to experience a comparatively greater influence from non-patriarchal hierarchical ideological influences. Furthermore, as Balzer and others (1997) suggest, colonisation is, of course, a pervasive form of domination in itself, one that would also operate to socialise Maori men into the attitudes that underlie MAFP.

Phenomenon 14: Child abuse

Some theorists argue that it is not useful to provide a general theory of intimate family abuse. They argue that all the forms of family abuse are not the same and that aggregating them tends to obscure the nature of each problem (Breines & Gordon, 1983). Others, however, emphasize that although the different forms of intimate family

abuse each have unique features, they still share many common features (Finkelhor & Pillemer, 1988). In this study the common features of various forms of family abuse are emphasized and the new feminist integrated theory is, therefore, also offered as an explanation of child abuse.

The phenomenon of child abuse; that is, the systematic control and domination of children by intimate adults, is widely recognized as a serious and widespread phenomenon (Starr, 1988). Like MAFP, child abuse involves domination and control perpetrated by a person higher in the hierarchy than the victim. In the child abuse literature, child abuse has in fact been specifically defined as violent or controlling acts towards a less powerful person (Finkelhor & Pillemer, 1988). The new feminist integrated theory outlined here explains child abuse as a direct result of the dominant hierarchical culture. It would suggest that acts of abuse towards children directly originate from the perpetrators hierarchical belief system, and that systematic patterns of child abuse are perpetrated by persons higher in the hierarchy than the child, who have themselves experienced the unmoderated effects of a hierarchical upbringing and consequent empathy deficits.

Phenomenon 15: The concurrence of MAFP and father-perpetrated child abuse⁶¹

Estimates as to the overlap between MAFP and child abuse vary. However the empirical evidence at this point in time suggests that children whose mothers are abused by their partners, are more likely to be also be abused by their mothers partner, than children whose mothers are not abused (Pocock, 1994). This fact would be readily explained by the current theory. Both women and children are subordinate to men, so if a male in the household was predisposed to be abusive to others, both women and children would make suitable victims.

Phenomenon 16: Women as perpetrators of child abuse

Phenomenon 4 refers to the absence of a phenomenon of husband battering. Although women do not commonly abuse their male partners, they are commonly perpetrators of abuse directed towards children. Again, the current theory could readily explain this phenomenon. Even if a women possessed the empathy deficits that this theory suggests underlie the perpetration of abuse, this abuse would not usually be directed towards a male partner, because the hierarchical ideology precludes this. However, the hierarchical ideology identifies a child, as a subordinate in the hierarchy and, therefore, positioned as an appropriate victim for a woman.

⁶¹Father-perpetrated child abuse includes abuse perpetrated by a male who takes on the father role.

Phenomenon 17: Elder abuse

Elder abuse has only a 20 year history as an academic problem. Early in the history of elder abuse research, the apriori assumption was that elder abuse was a direct result of elder ill-health and dependency. However, a series of empirical studies, using a variety of different methods to compare abused elders with non-abused elders did not support this notion (Bristowe & Collins, 1989; Homer & Gilleard, 1990; Pillemer, 1985, 1986; Pillemer & Finkelhor, 1989). The research emphasis in the field has subsequently begun focusing on perpetrator characteristics and studies have generally found that those who abuse elders are more likely to have drug dependencies, alcoholism, mental retardation or mental illness, as well as higher rates of arrest and other deviant behaviours (Osborn, 1996).

At this point in time virtually no research has focused on macro-explanatory mechanisms, such as the social and cultural context. The research does, however, indicate that the perpetrator of elder abuse is generally the adult child of the victim, although it does not make clear whether this is most often a son or daughter (Osborn, 1996). The basic fact that elder abuse involves a perpetrator from an age group higher in the hierarchy and a victim lower in the hierarchy (an elder parent), is entirely overlooked in this literature.⁶² As with the phenomenon of child abuse, the current theory is also offered as an explanation for the phenomenon of elder abuse.

Phenomenon 18: Types of domestic abuse offenders

Various typologies of domestic abuse offenders have been suggested, and these generally relate to the generality of the abuse, the severity of the abuse, and absence or presence of psychopathology (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994). These existing typologies focus on grouping existing men on the basis of measurable psychological and social attributes. As Edleson (1996) has suggested, it may be more useful for future efforts to focus on establishing typologies relating to how men decide to change or how they respond to treatment.

In this vein, Brisson (1983) has presented a typology that divides domestic abuse offenders into those who recognize that they have a problem and take responsibility, and those who do not. This typology could clearly be explained in terms of the current theory. It would suggest that those domestic abuse offenders who are motivated to change, are those men who have their ability to empathize intact and are, therefore, those who also tend to perpetrate *acts of abuse* rather than *systematic patterns of abuse*.⁶³ Effectively these men have the capacity to choose not to abuse. In

⁶²At some point in a parent and child's life-histories, the position of hierarchy switches. When the child is young, the parent is the hierarchy, but later in life when the child becomes an adult, and the parent ages, the child becomes the hierarchy.

⁶³See *Applications*, p. 122 for an elaboration of these two problem types.

comparison, those domestic abuse offenders who do not recognize that they have a problem, and do not tend to take responsibility, do not have their ability to empathize intact (and therefore also tend to perpetrate a *systematic pattern of abuse*). It would also be assumed by the current theory that the latter group would be less receptive to treatment.

Practical Utility

This new feminist integrated theory has initial practical utility as it suggests both treatment and prevention interventions. One of the treatments that it suggests focuses on addressing empathy deficits. Further empirical work would, however, clearly be needed to determine if these deficits are in fact reversible. Even if research showed that they were reversible, this treatment would be likely to require a considerable amount of time and money, and it may well be that within a predominantly hierarchical culture there is not sufficient social will to provide the resources needed.⁶⁴ ⁶⁵ Furthermore, as Audre Lorde (1984) claims, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 110). As a result of these constraints, at the present point in time, the most immediate and reliable approach to treatment may be in the form of limiting domestic abuse offender's opportunity to abuse by removing them from the abusing situation until it can be ensured that the abuse has ended. Furthermore, if future research finds that empathy deficits are not reversible, or efforts to counter the immense influence of patriarchy are not feasible, this may be the only realistic treatment option available.

The preventative interventions that this theory suggests have high value, because they offer a prevention that has far-reaching consequences, and not just in the area of family abuse, or only for women. These preventative efforts, however, may face the same practical constraints as do the treatment interventions. In a highly individualistic, hierarchical culture, the reality is likely that any large scale preventative initiatives will not receive the support they need to work effectively. For example, currently within New Zealand, the primary resources in the area of domestic abuse prevention, are now given to psychologists. Although many psychologists would regard prevention to be important, they do not get funded to do prevention work, and may be limited by the view that prevention involves activism and is, therefore, both non-scientific and unprofessional.

⁶⁴It has been my experience that in both the areas of MAFP and child care and protection services, this is in fact the case. A considerable number of individuals both within and outside of these systems do not seem to have any major reservations with the current system.

⁶⁵Interventions would need to be extensive to successfully counter the influence of the dominant patriarchal culture in these men's lives.

It is noted that the position taken in this new theory regarding intent may be considered by feminist scholars as having conservative social implications, because it fosters conceptions relating to the deterministic nature of men's abuse and de-emphasizes men's responsibility. It could, however, be argued that in fact this position has radical consequences, in that it places the intervention emphasis squarely on prevention. The new feminist integrated theory suggests that possibly the only reliable solution to the problem of MAFP, is for society to change so as to not to create people with the potential to abuse in the first place.

Conceptual Issues

The new feminist integrated theory clearly needs to be developed in more depth, particularly in relation to the explanation relating to attachment and empathy. An important strength of this theory, however, is that it is compatible with research in other fields. This new feminist integrated theory is consistent with the literature on resilience, which attempts to explain why all children who are abused do not exhibit symptomology (Rutter, 1985, 1987; Zirman, 1986). This body of research suggests that an important mechanism in children's resilience to effects of abuse, is a positive relationship with a caretaker, who has the attributes necessary for attachment, which were listed previously in this chapter.

The new feminist integrated theory is also compatible with the empirical phenomenon of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. This disorder includes symptoms relating to detachment or estrangement from others, and the inability to feel some emotions, like feelings of love (Criterion C6) (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). One of the distal cause of these symptoms is identified as parental abuse or mistreatment.⁶⁶

Finally the new feminist integrated theory is compatible with the Stockholm syndrome theory (Graham et al., 1988), and the coercive control theory (Okun, 1986), which were presented in the introduction of this study, and which attempt to explain the behaviour of women victims of MAFP. The new feminist integrated theory suggests that MAFP involves two distinct problems or types of offending. It identifies the *systematic and continued abuse* perpetrated by men who have deficits in their empathy mechanism, and the less systematic, *acts of abuse*, which will be perpetrated by men who have been socialized into the hierarchical ideology, but who do not possess deficits in their empathy mechanism. As a result there would be two corresponding victim groups expected; women who are occasionally subjected to varying degrees of

⁶⁶Although psychological disorders generally do not posit distal cause, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is an exception.

control and domination by their partners, and women who are subjected to continued and systematic abuse.

Although the new feminist integrated theory does not explicitly consider women victims, it would clearly imply that they, like all others in a hierarchical culture, will be socialized into believing in the rightfulness and naturalness of the patriarchal system, and they will, therefore, be socialized to accept being the victim of their partner. It is important to stress, however, that the new feminist integrated theory would not suggest that women partners of abusive men are any different in respect of their belief systems, than other women, or others generally in the hierarchical culture. The only difference between them and other women, is that they are in a relationship with an abusing male.

The Stockholm syndrome theory (Graham et al., 1988), and the coercive control theory (Okun, 1986) suggest that the phenomena that occur in women partners of abusive men, can be best explained as the ordinary results of being in a situation of coercive control. These explanations would in fact complement the new feminist integrated theory and could be used in conjunction with it to explain the characteristics of women who are continually and systematically abused, including these women's fear of escaping the situation and dependency on, and identification with, the controller. It could in fact be argued, that the mind control that is referred to in these theories, is in effect, merely an extension of the original socialisation into hierarchical society that women experience.

8.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has provided an integrated theory of MAFP that can explain a number of the important phenomena in the field, and that also has considerable practical utility, and conceptual coherence. This new feminist integrated theory suggests that the hierarchical system of social organisation and ideology, is the ultimate cause of MAFP and other forms of family abuse.

As a realist explanation, this new theory points to causes which have not been observed but which are postulated to be causally responsible for what is observed (McMullin, 1978). As such this new theory is not presented as a correct or definitive explanation, but as a provisional one that will later, during the process of further theory development, be modified or even possibly totally rejected.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

This study has contributed to theory construction in the field of MAFP by identifying and organizing the existing theories of MAFP, by making explicit the explanation that each of these theories provides, and by thoroughly evaluating these explanations. In addition, it has provided a new integrated theory of MAFP which can explain a considerable number of important phenomena in the field. It is noted that this new feminist integrated theory is presented as a postulational theory. As such, it is not assumed to be true at this point in time, but is presented as a *reasonable candidate for the truth*. It remains for this theory to be further developed and subsequently evaluated against other postulational integrated theories.

9.1 IMPLICATIONS

The new feminist integrated theory presents MAFP as a problem that has sociocultural origins that is then transformed into both a family and an individual problem. The theory suggests that the problem of MAFP is primarily a result of the pervasive hierarchical ideology and social system, and the consequent hierarchical beliefs and empathy deficits in individual men. If one accepted this theory, there would be several implications for intervention in the problem of MAFP. The practical utility of this theory was dealt with in the preceding chapter, and so will only be briefly considered here. In relation to treatment, this theory suggests interventions directed at developing the empathy response, reducing the opportunity for the abuse to occur, and establishing immediate and significant social consequences for abusive behaviour. In terms of prevention, the theory clearly suggests changes to the hierarchical systems which underlie this abuse. Furthermore, it suggests intervening with the children in families where abuse occurs.

A significant constraint on the preventative solutions suggested by this theory, would be to find a way around the problem of achieving change in a hierarchical system, when the impetus for this change originated from the hierarchical system itself. If the system of hierarchy is as pervasive as this theory suggests, there would be a difficulty in gathering sufficient social support to make the major structural and social changes necessary. Similarly, in terms of treatment, attempting to counter the lifelong influence of patriarchy would be a major undertaking.

9.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

There are various limitations to this current study. One that has already been acknowledged is that each theory's explanatory breadth was in most part evaluated in relation to empirical phenomena relating to acts of physical violence, rather than abuse as it is conceptualized within this study. As there is a general dearth of empirical research relating to *abuse* as it was conceived of in this study, this limitation was essentially unavoidable. Accepting this limitation was also justified by arguing that acts of male violence in a patriarchal system would likely constitute abuse.

As previously noted, there are a number of important methodological problems inherent in the body of empirical research on MAFP, which limit the ability to draw firm conclusions about what are, and what are not, genuine phenomena. This study identified ten *relatively* robust empirical findings which for the purposes of this study, were treated as phenomena. It may be, however, that as more empirical research is completed, the empirical findings which in this study were treated as phenomena, and which formed the basis of the evaluations of explanatory breadth, may turn out to be less robust. As a result, some of the evaluations performed in this study may later require modification.

The explications and evaluations carried out in this study were based solely upon my own interpretations of the various theories. Frequently, few explicit explanatory details are explicitly provided in the literature. Although every effort was made to fairly represent each theory, this current study involved making a number of assumptions about what the various theories were actually asserting. A further limitation of this study was that it considered a very large number of theories. Although it was argued that this was necessary for the aim of providing an integrated theory, this made for a somewhat cumbersome project and precluded more in-depth analyses.

A final limitation of this study was that it did not consistently consider, or evaluate, the relationship between the theories of MAFP, and the parent theories from which they might have originated. It also did not consider the applications of these parent theories in other substantive areas. For example, this study only considered cognitive-behavioural theory as it has been directly applied to MAFP. A valid and important aspect of theory evaluation would have been to consider how effectively the general cognitive-behavioural theory had been applied or developed in the area of MAFP, and how its development in the field of MAFP compared to the development of the cognitive-behavioural theory in other substantive areas.

9.3 FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

On the basis of the above criticisms, the following recommendations for future research are presented. In relation to empirical research, it is critical that more studies are completed so that well established empirical regularities can be identified, and further theory construction in the area can be undertaken. To ensure that future empirical studies are productive, it is imperative that the methodological shortcomings evident in the empirical literature to date are addressed. To do this, future studies must access men who are not publicly identified as batterers, include men from all cultures, identify the problem as *abuse* rather than acts of physical violence, and involve women partners of abusive men as active participants in any research process. This latter would preclude women's experiences being obscured by imposing an interpretation which may contradict victims' perceptions. It is also imperative that future empirical research involves constructive replications, rather than single studies analyzed with statistical significance testing, for the latter does not in fact identify phenomena, despite the fact that it is generally thought to do so (Oakes, 1986).

Further empirical research is also urgently needed in relation to the evaluation of the various possible interventions for MAFP. As indicated previously in this study, treatment evaluation studies to date, have suffered from a number of methodological problems which have resulted in inflated measures of success. To remedy these methodological problems, future evaluation studies must, for example, define success as the total eradication of abuse, rather than its reduction, and must also include men who leave treatment programmes before completion in calculations of success. Furthermore these studies must incorporate long follow-up periods and not rely on offenders self-reports or define recidivism only in terms of official contact with the criminal justice system. As with the general empirical research referred to above, future treatment outcome evaluation studies also need to consider the non-physical aspects of abuse in measures of outcome, and use replications rather than single studies analysed with statistical significance testing, to determine generalizability of results.

A number of recommendations can also be made in relation to future theoretical research. The current study provides only a small contribution to what is needed in the ongoing process of theory construction in the field of MAFP. The standard explications^a of current theories need to be evaluated and revised. In addition, researchers need to work on alternative explications of the same theories.

As noted above, other integrated theories need to be developed and evaluated against the new feminist integrated theory presented here.

Another important general theoretical task that needs to be undertaken in this area, is to systematically consider the applicability of general criminological theories to the problem of MAFP. Finally future empirical and theoretical studies need to focus on elucidating the mechanisms of change within social systems. This task would likely be interdisciplinary and would be a critical prerequisite to a transformation of the hierarchical structures and ideologies

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